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*Deposited 10. June 1859.*

THE

HERMIT OF THE PYRENEES

AND OTHER

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS,

BY

WM. D. S. ALEXANDER.

---

REPRINTED FROM THE LONDON EDITION.

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LONDON :

LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, LONGMANS, & ROBERTS.

1859.



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HERMIT OF THE PYRENEES,

& C.

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E. J. Nicholson  
Clerk.



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AND OTHER

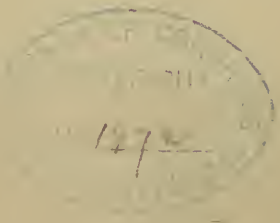
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*Entered in Dist. Court  
for Dist. of Columbia 1859*

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TO  
CHARLES DICKENS. ESQ..

THE FOLLOWING POEMS

ARE

WITH HIS KIND PERMISSION

Respectfully Dedicated

BY

THE AUTHOR.



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TO ———

~~~~~

WILL thine eye look upon this mystic page ?  
And wilt thou know from whom these visions come ?  
Or art thou so much changed since last we met  
That at this hour thou canst no longer tell  
What hand thus writes — what burdened heart pours out  
    The current of its woe ?  
    Not as in former days  
Can I now murmur forth a dulcet lay,  
Or charm thine ear with glad enlivening song —  
The storm, the blight have entered here within,  
    And all is bitterness  
    Where once was life and joy.

Yes, I have suffered heavily and long,  
 And still appears no end, no cheering goal,  
 No welcome haven shining from afar,  
 Reward for present trial. All is dark,  
 And through the deepening shades I wander on !

Yet in my spirit burns  
 A fierce consuming fire  
 That will not rest, but ever and anon  
 Shoots meteor-like into the spangled heaven,  
 Then sinks again. The other stars are bright —  
 No sympathy is there !  
 It ended all with thee.

My path lies through the wilderness of life,  
 Or mid its rocky mountains, cold and drear,  
 Thine, in the cultured gardens of the earth,  
 Where perfumed flowers and shady groves appear,  
 And palaces disclose their marble fronts.

The edifice *I* raised  
 Once on a time for thee  
 Hath fall'n to ruin, and ivy hath o'errun  
 The spots where roses bloomed. Perchance thou'lt say  
 It matters not how soon all trace is gone !

But I can linger still  
 About it with regret.



Art thou quite happy in thy present state?  
 Surrounded by the riches of the world—  
 Doth not one thought of former days return,  
 And hang upon the bright horizon, like  
 A summer cloud to veil the blazing sun?  
     True, I have heard thee say  
     Thou wouldst look on the Past  
 As on a dream, all bodiless and light!  
 Not from thy spirit came those thoughtless words:  
 With all thy might thou canst not conquer Thought!  
     And Thought *will* wander back  
     To scenes of former days.

Yet why to thee do I address these lines?  
 On which, perchance, thine eyes will never rest—  
 And if they should, what follows? O'er the grave  
 Which will be opened in the past again  
 Wilt thou let fall one warm regretful tear?—  
     I'll fain believe as much,  
     And treasure up the flower  
 That on the spot will raise its gentle head—  
 One rose amid this wilderness to bloom  
 And waft its perfume through the chilling air! . . .  
     O peace! The thread I weave  
     Breaks in my hand—Farewell!



THE  
HERMIT OF THE PYRENEES.

A Legend of the Mountains.

## NOTE.



At the south-eastern extremity of the beautiful valley of Luz, in the Pyrenees, upon an eminence, rises an old and half-ruined Tower, which, it is said, was for a number of years tenanted by a lonely Recluse.

## INTRODUCTION.

---

STILL, mighty mountains ! still my fancy flies  
Back to the clime where you sublimely rise,  
Robed in dark cloudy mantles and ice-crowned—  
Befitting sovereigns of the plains around !  
From east to west your serried ranks extend,  
And with the skies above their glories blend ;  
Now lovely in rich verdant slopes and woods  
Where beauty wanders and where silence broods,  
Now gently sinking into valleys, meet,  
To be for Love or Age the calm retreat :  
Now terrible in dismal waste or steep  
Down which the angry torrents madly sweep,  
Burst from the towering cliff in foaming surge  
Or thunder through the dark and hollow gorge ;—  
Where Desolation, nature's anarchy,  
Revels and mocks at Order's monarchy.

Such wondrous scenes, with ever-varied hue,  
Rise like enchantment to the stranger's view ;

And, if his soul at grandeur in him glows,  
Around his glances with delight he throws !  
Imagination, freed from meaner things,  
Soars proudly upward on its eagle wings—  
Surveys the cataract, the verdant vale  
Whose balmy odours rise upon the gale,  
Or broods majestic o'er some precipice  
Belted with clouds and capped with glittering  
ice,

Where angel ministers alone have trod  
In blest communion with great Nature's God.  
What voice of earth could raise its feeble key  
To the full compass of a melody  
That in its golden and inspirèd flow  
Might all the overwhelming wonders show  
Which, ever-loved and glorious mountains ! you  
Within your granite bosoms hide from view ?  
Not mine the power to raise this mighty song,  
And o'er our land its thrilling notes prolong :  
Not mine to sing the splendours of a clime  
Where beauty sits upon a throne sublime—  
Beneath a sun, displays her radiant smiles,  
Unfelt, unknown in our cold northern isles.

Wake ! ye that slumber on from hour to hour  
And know not beauty in its pride and power !  
Awake, and worship at those cloud-capped shrines  
Whereon a never-dying grandeur shines ;

Where I have worshipped and inhaled a joy  
Whose memory no time can e'er destroy—  
Sweet as rich nectar in the brimming bowl  
Was that blest draught to my enraptured soul!  
Rise from your too voluptuous revels, ye  
Pale children of that false fiend Luxury,  
Whose hours are barren as a waste of sand  
When the tide-wafted waters leave the strand—  
Whose days too oft are nights—whose nights are  
days  
Consumed amid the empty dazzling rays  
Of gilded lamps that shed their light on courts,  
Or baser temples where foul Crime resorts.  
Awake! O ye in speculation bold,  
Whose thoughts are wealth, whose only God is Gold!  
Wake to the true One! who deigns not to dwell  
Where men their souls and bodies buy and sell;  
Nor glitters in the myriad shining gems  
That deck profusely Pleasure's diadems—  
Awake, I say, O worldly ones awake!  
And pilgrimage to Nature's altars make,  
There worship Him at whose pervading voice  
The hills and valleys tremble or rejoice!

Majestic mountains! I have known you long  
And cling yet to you with affection strong:  
My fate hath snatched me from your rugged breasts  
Yet with you ever my crushed spirit rests—

In daylight roaming 'mid your solitudes  
Near roaring torrents or in trackless woods :  
At evening, like a spectre pale and dim,  
Stealing among the shadows dark and grim  
Of some exalted peak, or erring now  
Through the cold moonlight on the glacier's brow.

O Nature !—mother Nature !—'tis to be  
More than thrice blessèd thus to worship thee !  
Could I into thy lap pour all my years !  
That certainty would soothe all future fears !  
Ope then thine arms ! let me not call in vain,  
And take me faithful to thy heart again.  
Receive me with thine aspect grand yet calm ;  
Much need have I of thy restoring balm  
To my world-blighted powers, or how essay  
To weave the thread of this fantastic lay—  
This mystic floweret culled upon the height  
From whence the eagle spreads his wings for flight.  
Combine, O Nature, with true Poesy,  
That not in vain my arduous task may be—  
That to my listeners I may show how Faith  
And holy Love can conquer even Death.



# THE HERMIT

AND

HIS CELL IN THE VALLEY OF LUZ.



## I.

NONE knew the dwellèr on that rugged steep.

Yet all regarded him with fear.

His dark expressive eyes

Shone with a melancholy light,

Like those fair golden stars,

Distant and wonderful,

Which rouse our speculation as we gaze—

They were like those bright worlds

Men seek in vain to fathom,

And yet their lustre pleased,

For, though their rays were mystery,

There was a meaning in them felt by all.

Arching those soul-lit orbs

Arose his pale and intellectual brow,

Wide, high, majestic, and ploughed

With lines of ponderous thought,

Or deep and untold grief.

So looks the mighty portal

Of some time-hoary edifice,

More deeply beautiful by ruin made,

Upon whose massive moss-grown front

We seek the history of bygone days.

Each feature of his face  
Most eloquently spake  
To all who know to read the human heart ;  
But unto those dull souls  
Who look not farther than the surface,  
Nor care to sound the depths,—  
To them the Hermit stood alone,  
Mysteriously apart  
From every other of his mortal race.

His dark beard low depended, like his locks,  
With here and there a thread of silvery white  
To prove that time had joinèd hands with sorrow—  
This only, and no more.

Tall was his stature as erect he stood  
At morn upon some lofty pinnacle

Hard by his lonely cell,  
And seemed a spirit for a better world  
Invoking pardon on this harmful one.  
Neglect is but a sloven, not a man,  
And in him showed not ever.

His garb was neat but plain,  
In colour stern, close fitting to each limb ;  
Coarse sandals clothed his feet.

Simple his habits as his neighbours poor,  
Who gazed with reverence on him  
From the fair vale beneath.

Hast thou e'er wandered on the sea-washed shore,

Mid broken rocks and caves,  
In classic Italy?

(While listening to the music of the waters,  
And meditating 'mid the ruins  
Strewn everywhere around)

Perchance thine eye hath lighted on a column,  
Standing alone; no object of its kind  
Afar or near.

How fair it looks, so desolately left  
Upon the shore!

Unscathed its marble pride,  
Save in its whiteness which the sun  
And time have softened to a rosy hue,  
On high it rears its sculptured, lordly head.  
A perishable thing although it be,  
Around it clings the glory of its race  
To make men marvel that it should be there.

So stood the Hermit of the vale of Luz,  
At morning seen upon the mountain height.  
Struck by the majesty of form and look,  
The traveller paused, and, wondering, gazed upon  
him;

But to the questions "Who and what he was?"  
"Why lived he life of barren solitude?"

Answer could none.

They loved their Hermit, said the simple swains,  
Supplied with care his humble wants,  
But knew no more.

They dared not question him themselves ;  
Enough indeed that he had deigned to choose  
    Their valley for his home  
    And shroud them with his blessing.  
He was a mystic spirit  
That sometimes came and sometimes went,  
    Whither, they could not say.  
For days and weeks together  
They missed his godlike figure from the hill  
    And prayed for his return.  
When he once more appeared  
    Their hearts felt gladness at the sight,  
And shone the sun yet warmer on their valley.

Strange are the tales they of the Hermit tell  
    To the rapt, listening stranger,  
At evening seated by the peasant's hearth  
    On the dark mountain side.  
    God shield him in his need !  
He was a holy, self-denying man,  
    His way of life well proved ;  
    But what he once had been  
    None dare to risk surmise :  
Had he been guilty of the deepest crimes  
    The world's black records own  
All must be pardon'd, thought they, long ago.  
Years had he lived within yon ancient tower  
    That crowns the lofty eminence

At the east end of Luz's smiling vale ;  
And when he first appeared  
They could but ill remember—  
Could fix no certain date—

He always had been there, they thought,—  
At least as far adown the slopes of Time  
As their own days extended.

All was deep mystery concerning him !  
If of another world, as some believed,  
He was no evil genius, sure they felt,  
For since he hither came  
They had no cause to grieve ;  
All prospered wondrously !

Their harvests were abundant, pastures fine,  
And flocks and herds increasing.  
Year after year in greater number strangers  
Poured their vast riches in,  
And generous Plenty came  
To drive lean Poverty in shame away  
Unto less favoured scenes.

Yes, they all loved their father Hermit well,  
And he for them felt love,  
Or wherefore choose their valley and abide  
In the grey, ancient tower ?

He ne'er would leave them till the mystic hour  
That saw his mission to the earth fulfilled,

And then perchance to their upturned eyes  
His spirit-form would reassume its shape,  
And wing its flight upon the rushing wind  
To paradise and God!

Spirit or man, his nature was most strange.  
The food up carried to his lonely cell  
Accepted was, or with a gracious smile,  
Or a few gentle words

That fell harmonious on the bearer's ear,  
Sometimes did he refuse and close his door,  
Announcing near departure;  
But there 't was ever left

Till eagles, or the prowling hungry wolf  
Consumed the proffered fare.

Hunters adventurous on the *Izard's* track,  
That climb the icy peak at early dawn,  
Or brave the dangers of the glacier's snows,  
With fear declare to have encountered him  
Gliding majestic o'er the frozen mass,  
Unshaken by the terrors of the way.

Would they to speak to him have dared?  
Not even for their lives!

Once on a time, they say,  
A bold man raised his voice  
To question rudely why

He wandered thus upon the virgin snow?  
The Hermit's eye upon him glared



So piercing and so stern  
That the rash hunter quailed  
Beneath its awful fire.

He turned away and fled;

And, struck with terror, heeding not his steps,  
Fell down a yawning gulf to rise no more!

In pleasing contrast, others will relate  
How, when black night descended o'er the world  
Robed in the vapoury mantle of the storm,  
And summoned forth the winds that eager watch,  
Like mischief-laden fiends, to spread alarm

And dire confusion far and wide—

When the big echoing thunder sent  
Its mighty notes abroad, and lightnings curled  
Like fiery serpents down the mountain flanks

With awful glare and crash—

As from the summit of the peak,

Beneath the self-same stroke

Rolled the tall hoary pine,

The riven granite rock

Plunging into the boiling torrent deep!—

When the poor Traveller, stumbling on his way,

Faint with his efforts, and with terror wild,

Sought the lost track in vain,

And, yielding to his fate,

Sank slowly down to die—

In that nigh fatal hour

The Hermit suddenly beside him stood,  
Spoke words of comfort sweet,  
And lending to his aid a stalwart arm,  
Raised the poor drooping wretch  
To lead him from his flinty couch of death,  
And its cold shroud of snow,  
Back unto life, his children, and his home !

Did they not bless him for such acts as these ?  
Ay, fervently ! and when at evening shone  
His lamp of watchfulness—perhaps of prayer—  
From the grey time-worn tower,  
Upward their eyes they turned  
To the pale gleaming star,  
And then, above it, to the ethereal vault,  
As if to marvel which of those that burned  
Amid the countless thousands bright and fair  
Had thus so near them come !

# THE HERMIT AND THE MAN.



## II.

SWEET vale of Luz,

Fairest among so many passing fair !

When first I saw thee, by thy glowing charms

My heart was won ;

And now my memories wander back to thee,

Like care-worn pilgrims of the olden time

Laden with offerings to their favourite shrine.

I'll raise thy much loved picture from the dust

Long years have strewn upon it, and once more

Thy beauty show in its own wooing form.

Who can forget thee,

Fair smiling valley ?

Watched by thy mountain brothers, whose huge  
arms

Close linked, protect thee with a jealous care :

So slept the virgin in the warrior camp

In the old time of strife and mail-clad men :

So 'mid the ocean's stormy billows hides

Some golden isle, a speck of paradise.

Luz ! thou art girt by giants : their proud crests,

Towering aloft, the stranger spies afar,

And marvels that a thing so fair as thou  
    Could nestle in such bosoms.  
Yet paint we beauty in the arms of Mars ;  
And Vulcan's fingers toy with Venus' locks—  
Yea, Ugliness itself will woo and win  
    If but the power of soul be there  
    To arm the tongue with eloquence.

Hail to thee, Luz ! As through the hollow gorge  
Of *Pierrefitte* we approach, how sink our hearts  
    Within us at the sight !  
On either side, a thousand dizzy feet,  
Huge walls arise and form a mighty porch  
To greater terrors as our steps advance.  
So dark the chasm, so grim, so menacing—  
Earthquake, who made it, must lie sleeping there !  
In such a doorway might Death's Angel stand  
    With outstretched dusky wings,  
To sweep all bold adventuring mortals down !  
In such a doorway (did it lead to hell  
And not the smiling heaven that lies beyond)  
    Might the grim beldam, Sin,  
    Sit with her bestial train  
    In conflict horrible.

But onward now we toil,  
    And turn and wind,  
    And wind and turn

Upward and upward still.

Above our heads stupendous mountains meet

In the embrace of Titans,

Casting deep shadows down—

Now they retire a space

And through the momentary gap

A cheering beam from heaven descends.

Thus to the mind of Man,

Through Error's clouds that gather round his steps,

Will Truth and Faith appear,

And fill his being with a blessed light !

Could he be satisfied to rest him there,

All would be well—but, no ! the tortuous path

Still tempts him, and the cloud

Again surrounds his way.

On ! on ! Where tread we now ?

Where once the Eagle scaled

With wide expanded wings the towering cliff,

And taught her eaglets from their eyrie first

To trust the void and gaze into the sun.

Man hath fought Nature in her wildest haunt

And conquered here ;

Not for one footing but for many feet

Support he finds ;

And where the vast abyss profoundest yawns

He spans it in mid air.

One light and graceful arch,

And we look Danger in the face and smile,  
As she, abashed, steals through the deep'ning gloom  
In the fierce cataract that boils beneath.

E'en thus strong Will  
Can force a passage through the rocks of flint  
Adversity uprears.

Despair may like a frightful chasm gape,  
But resolution throws the bridge across.

And now, sweet Luz, thy charms salute our gaze,  
And the past terrors are forgotten, all.

O lovely vale ! who would not brave e'en more  
To be rewarded with a smile from thee,

And hang upon thy bosom fair ?

Fragrant and fresh, thy breath is e'er the same,  
When first thou wakest up at dewy morn  
To the warm kisses of the amorous sun,  
Or veil'st thyself at eve to rest in peace.

Through thy pure veins abundantly

Rich streams of life and health

Pursue their playful course —

And the green flowery meads,

The waving sprightly trees,

Thy flocks, thy herds, thy people —

All, all alike rejoice

That thou art theirs, and they are thine !

O lovely, happy vale !

And happy ye that call yourselves her sons !



'T is Summer, and the day  
Is hastening to its close.  
From the great western ridge  
The shadows softly steal  
Down to the cheerful vale,  
Like the first shades of grief  
On youthful Innocence.

Unreached, the old grey Tower  
Exalted on its rugged eminence,  
Clothed in full radiance yet,  
Looks boldly o'er the scene  
In the calm pride of age.

He, too, is there—the Hermit, the lone man  
Mysterious !

See where he stands upon the threshold  
Of the low gothic door,  
Down gazing with those star-like eyes  
Into the depth below ;

And now he raises them to heaven,  
Now sadly turns them to his narrow cell,  
While on his countenance the thoughts within  
Work fitful change—  
Now pale, now red,  
And pale again.

See ! his lips move, and thus the inward tumult  
Finds vent in words :—

“So dies another day  
After short cheerful life ;  
And in the aspect of yon western heaven  
I read the coming glories of to-morrow.  
How many times have I thus seen the light  
Die and give promise of as fair a dawn !  
Nature can change her aspect with the seasons,  
Now frown or gaily smile,  
Feel warm as love, or cold as yon wild hills  
That in the distance chill me with their ice.  
But I who live and wear this human form  
Must ever be the same,  
Unchanged, unchanging till the hour of doom.

“How many, gazing on this scene  
Of day’s departing glory, in themselves  
Would thus be tempted to exclaim :—  
Far better to be blotted out for aye,  
With every imperfection, than to bear  
Within one’s bosom the immortal spark  
Which never can expire !

“A retrospect of days  
Can make the strong man weak,  
Or give the weak one strength :  
Thrice happy he who wandering back, in thought,  
Along the placid stream of well-spent hours  
Sees heaven reflected there !

To him the Present, like yon western sky,  
Glows with the radiant promise of the morrow!  
His thoughts, like mountain summits, far above  
The storm-racked surface of the world, arise  
To catch the gorgeous sunset's myriad hues.

Death, like calm night, comes down  
Free from all terrors, cloudless and serene;  
Faith, like the moon, a silver radiance throws  
Upon his rest, and his good actions all

Shine o'er him like the stars—

Thus blissfully he sleeps

To waken with the glorious morrow's dawn!

“ Our doubts and speculations are as chaff

Blown in the face of heaven,

To be returned upon ourselves!—

Philosophy!

Thy praises have been sounded forth to men,

By their own tongues,

In languages of iron and of gold;

And, casting back our eyes

To where the mists of Time are thick'ning most,

Loom the pale phantoms of thy votaries,

Sages and rulers in long ages past,

Whose names shine out upon the night of Time

With lustre, though subdued, magnificent

As the great galaxy of heaven!—

Philosophy!

It was thy precious lamp, they said,  
That lit them hence.  
Pale, feeble light to *that* which blazes now !  
Yet in these days—  
These final days—  
A little ere the last great change shall come—  
Men fly from Faith to thee,  
Or shelter error in wild theories,  
False as themselves and barren !  
Philosophy was dead, or should have died,  
With the old era in the new-made Man—  
What need for her and Him ?  
The moon for darkness and the sun for day—  
Shine both at once, the weaker light  
Must pale into eclipse.  
O man ! vain man ! vain world ! vain empty  
things  
Born of her labouring womb,  
Confusion is your name, and ye shall be  
Confounded in the end, and scattered all !  
  
“ Why did I leave thee, world, and hither come  
An outcast and a wanderer ?  
Because I loved thee and found no return ;  
Because I trusted thee and found thee false ;  
Because I dreamt of freedom and found chains  
I would not drag, and call their clanking music—  
Because I saw, amid thy storms and wrecks,

A mighty Truth which men essayed to teach,  
But only darkened with their cavils,  
Surmises, wild imaginings;  
Heart-coldness all, and narrowness of mind.

I saw with mine own eyes,  
Halo'd with light celestial,  
That *open way* which others would allow  
But took not, and I raised my voice  
To speak what I believed.—

Then persecution came.  
My crime, the crime of all  
Who dare to *utter* what the heart can *feel*  
'Mid the assenting crowd

That fear to own the truth lest lip of scorn  
Against them curl, or the sharp stinging lash  
Of ridicule assail their fame.

Thou tyrant, Fame! that in the breast of man  
Canst stifle Conscience and the voice of Truth—  
Of Truth that cheers him through the light of  
Faith!—

I would not bear this stain, and fled.

“Ye mountains and ye valleys! now for years  
My refuge and my home,  
That peace which dwells not in the world I  
sought

And found in your wild bosoms—  
Through the elastic air my spirit soars

With a new life from ye to hail its God !  
O blessed solitudes ! delightful haunts  
    For the heart-weary wanderer,  
    The worn and sick of soul !  
Do I regret thee now, thou outer world ?—  
The prison-house wherein my spirit pined  
Like the poor captive in his narrow cell—  
    Here I least am free—I breathe !

“ Yet was there one alone, e’en there,  
    With whom I dreamt of liberty,  
    And love, and happiness—  
    Vain dream !  
Her heart, that I had deemed so rich, contained  
    Mere dross !  
It would not stand the test true gold will bear,  
    But softened and grew cold  
    With but a show of trial.  
O Ida ! hadst thou listened to my voice  
At the last moment, what might now have been  
    Thy portion ! In thine eyes  
Seemed mirror’d heaven, yet they could not see  
What mine perceived, and their dark lashes fell  
    To rise on me no more ! . . .  
Pale Rose ! thou droop’st upon the desert’s edge,  
Striving to bloom amid thy beauty’s wreck ;—  
Oh, when the flood from this wide mortal sea  
Shall set in all its force on that far shore,



May I be there to gather up some leaves  
Its waters shall have wafted ! . . . .

“ Slow sinks the sun beneath the western range !  
Like to some mighty sovereign of the earth  
Who feels his splendours hastening to their close,  
Yet to the last would make his subjects feel  
He was their Emperor, and King, and Lord,—  
Though fading fast still keeps his royal state,  
And 'mid its lustre stalks away from sight,  
The memory of his exit leaving long  
Its hues upon admiring multitudes.

“ I must begone this night !  
Farewell, thou peaceful vale ! thou happy cell !  
Farewell, perhaps for ever !  
If I return I'll love thee as of yore ;  
If not, my memory and my spirit shall  
Yet hang about thine ancient ruined walls,  
And men shall point to thee, and call thee mine.”

Night steals into the valley, and its shades  
Ascend each mountain to the highest peak,  
Then leap the void to summon forth the stars—  
Obedient they appear ; and, last of all,  
The silver-crownèd queen withdraws her veil  
To look with envy on the scene below,  
So calm in its repose.

Wakes there not one within yon lowly huts  
Whose thoughts display pale images of sin ?  
No ; all are wrapped in sleep, the sleep of peace  
And calm content that feareth not the dawn.

A beam falls on the Tower,  
Streams through a loophole in its time-worn flank,  
And shows a hard low couch,  
A table and a stool ;  
Upon the table rests an open book,  
And blazon'd on the thickly worded page  
Doth Revelation shine !

But he who wanders through the long still night,  
And reads those wondrous words—where is he  
now ?

His steps are in the valley.—No one hears,  
For like a spirit from another world  
He wanders through the silence of the night.  
And now the entrance of the pass he gains,  
But pauses ere he seeks its midnight depths,  
To cast, perchance, a last regretful look  
Up to his dwelling on the moonlit rock—

His home for many years.

While thus he stands and breathes a last farewell,  
An echoing voice resounds  
Through the still gorge beyond,  
Chanting a cheerful lay,  
And a tall figure soon



Comes gaily up the path :

'Tis Pierre, the hunter. Not a better man  
Draws breath in all Bigorre.

He sees the Hermit as he stands display'd  
In the cold moonlight, and at once his song  
Ceases in mid career.—

He lowly bends and blessing asks  
Of him he meets, which freely is bestow'd  
In solemn silence, and they part  
Each on his several way.

Few know the Hermit of the vale of Luz,  
But Pierre well knows him—hath conversed with  
him

And seen him in his cell.  
Why favoured thus and how that favour won  
The following tale shall tell.



THE STORY

OF

**THE BEAR-HUNTER.**



## III.

THY valley, Campan, oft hath been the theme  
 Of thine own native Poets' glowing lays :  
 Romance in thee hath found a happy site  
 Whereon to build her structures light and fair ;  
 If I, too, place thy name upon my page,  
 'Tis to recall the many joyous hours  
 'T was once my lot to while away in thee.

Nor first nor last art thou  
 Amid thy sister vales  
 That cluster round thee in profusion rich—  
 Thy beauty hath a quiet tone,  
 And takes us not by storm  
 At the first careless glance,  
 But steals upon us as we follow up  
 Thy varied course and know thee more.  
 So in this changeful world,  
 Amid the loveliness that meets our gaze,  
 Some silent Beauty moves,  
 Scarce noticed at the first,  
 But, as we wander through the dazzling groups,  
 Her grace and gentleness attract our eye ;

Then by degrees, as we peruse her face,  
She gains upon us with her softer charms  
And steals into our hearts.

Near where Sainte Marie from her ancient tower  
Uprears the Cross which doth redeem mankind,  
And hath assembled round her sacred fane  
A few stanch children of the quiet vale—  
Above the rest, upon a grassy slope,

Pierre's humble cottage stands.

A hundred years have passed and left unchanged  
Its roof of slate, its walls of uncut stone,  
Its lowly porch, and garden strip, and field  
Where grows the red-eared corn, the peasant's prop  
His fuel, bed, and food.

Lord of the small domain his grandsire tilled,  
With honest pride he looks upon his own,  
And feels that freedom independence gives,  
Best boon from heaven to man !

O Liberty ! thy name  
Is holy in the mouths of those  
Who truly breathe thine air—who gaze around  
And mark the dread oppressor's hated track  
Amid the sighs and tears  
Of nobler natures than his own.  
How many boast of thee who know thee not !  
Rear altars to thee—heap upon thy name

Their mockery of praise ; their savage deeds,  
Which shock the world and heaven,  
Daring to justify by thee !

O shameless fall'n are they  
That can pervert thee thus,

And dip thy white robe in a sea of blood !

Degenerate France !

This act was thine : and to the end of time  
It shall cling round thee like the poisoned garment  
That robbed great Hercules of strength and life !

In contrast fair

Shine the long glories of the elder time  
When heroes fought and died  
For Liberty and Home.

And, later, when the lofty patriot, Tell,  
With all his brethren brave,  
Trampled proud Tyranny for ever down,  
And taught the world what virtuous Freedom was.

Yes ; to the stalwart, noble mountaineer  
Freedom is life ! He breathes it from his birth

In the fresh joyous air

That sweeps his native vales,

And to his manly limbs a vigour gives

So wondrous, so enduring.

Who dare oppress the haughty mountain child ?  
Answer, proud Austria ! whose hands are stained  
With Tyrolean gore, shed in defence

Of home and kindred. And, imperious Czar,  
Whose barbarous hordes, like hungry wolves, have  
sought

The life-blood of Circassia—  
Hast thou succeeded in thy dark designs,  
And forced thy yoke upon her freeborn neck?  
Vain the attempt! She mocks thee from her hills,  
And rolls her rocks upon the wretched slaves  
Who do thy hateful bidding!

A hardy son of mountain soil was Pierre;  
The hero of his vale for many acts  
Of unrecorded might,  
And daring, that would put to shame  
Those feats which in the world obtain  
Both fame and high reward.

Comely in feature, and in stature tall,  
Active as *Izard*, strong as wolf or bear,  
Few could compete with him, and none excel  
In those time-honoured trials of manly strength  
Which oft at eve upon the verdant sod  
Assembled Youth and Age.

And when the *Galoubée*, with thrilling note,  
And deep bass *Tambourin*, aroused the vale  
Upon some festive morn,  
First in the field was Pierre, in gay attire,  
To lead the dance, and win from her he loved,  
Sweet Katinosse, the Belle of Campan fair,  
A smile of fond return.



Where heaven the precious gift of strength  
bestows,

Its far-seeing wisdom adds thereto a soul  
Of lofty, generous nature, that such gift  
May nothing lose, but all its value prove.

So with our hero, Pierre.

Though envied all his agile, iron frame,  
With pride and joy they owned him for a friend,  
And praised his daring and his matchless skill  
In the chase perilous or festive sports.  
More than himself they felt and owned his worth,  
And yielded to his voice in all dispute

Without dissenting word.

Full oft would some aspiring youth

Up to Pierre's cottage take his way,  
And learn a lesson from his exploits, told

With frank good-humoured warmth.

In many hearts his graphic words have lit  
A fiery ardour for the dangerous life

'T was his delight to lead ;

And many a simple swain,

From his instruction and example,

Won for himself the hunter's dear-bought fame.

Thou monster of creation, grisly, huge,  
That mankind flee with hatred and with fear—

Bear of the Pyrenees ! for cruelty

Surpassing all thy kind—

What havoc made he in thy horrid ranks,  
That, ere his time, spread death and terror round,  
A thousand tongues can tell.

Oft from the lonely valley, far remote,

Uprose the cry of woe:

Sometimes for cattle, fall'n an easy prey,

Sometimes, alas, for human victims too.

"The Bear! The Bear!" and Pierre is on the  
track,

Perchance attended by a chosen few

Hardy and brave, but oftener still alone,

Nor gives he ground until the foe is slain.

What tales are told within his native vale

Of desperate daring, such as ears of men

Scarce heard before!

How he would crouch inside the fatal cave,

Whose rocky floor was paved with mangled bones

That told a dismal tale,

And there with knife or gun (such weapons  
frail!)

Await the night and grisly enemy.

He hears him come at length—

One shot, one deadly stab, and soon he falls,

Gasping his life away with savage growls,

And tearing at the ground with vengeful claws

In impotence of rage, whilst calmly stands

His conqueror.

Hail ! beauteous efforts of creation's skill,  
*Izard* and *Bouquetin* called, clean limbed and light !

Harmless and gentle as the timid hind,

Ye fly the face of man  
To climb the highest peak  
Of Alp or Pyrenee.

How wondrous to behold

At early dawn—the season of alarm

To all your graceful kind,

For then the hunter notes the doubtful track

Of feet that scarce leave impress in the snow—

How wondrous to behold

Your headlong, bounding course,

Knowing not pause or stop,

O'er the blue chasmed ice,

Or broken, jagged rocks,

Or where the precipice, with sudden dip,

Looks down a thousand feet !

Descent thus terrible affrights you not ;

Death is behind, life hangs upon your speed !

Down, down ye plunge amid the rattling crags,

Where foot of man would vainly seek a hold,

Soon far beyond his reach !

At early morn, upon some peak remote,

Whose shield of ice reflects in roseate hues

The rising orb of day,

How fair to view those light and graceful forms

In bold relief stand forth against the sky !  
With outstretched necks they snuff the passing  
breeze,

To danger e'er awake ;  
And should it lurk afar, and they detect  
The well-known savour, vain the hunter's toil !

They vanish as a thought  
Of beauty we neglect to seize.

Yet often have I seen,  
Despite instinctive caution and quick fear,  
The murderous rifle-ball o'ertake the herd  
And lay its victim low.

Poor timid thing ! each deep convulsive throb  
Seemed a reproach to Man that he must fain  
Destroy a life so sinless and so free.

E'en here triumphant love asserts his sway !  
Lo ! while one victim bleeds the loving mate  
Checks her wild flight, wherein her safety lay,  
To mourn his loss, until another ball

Mingles her ebbing life with his.

Great lesson for humanity !

If brutes can feel devotion such as this,  
What should not Man ! whose Godlike form and  
sense

Place him so far above them. Yet *his* hand  
Too oft, alas ! divides the holy cord  
Whereon are strung Affection's precious pearls !  
But to our hero, lion-hearted Pierre,

Whose exploits are our theme—  
Whose iron nerves, oft put to fearful proof,  
Never such trial or such horror knew  
As one too dreadful day—  
A day deep graven on his memory  
In characters as lasting as his life.

Winter's stern chilling glance  
Usurps sweet Summer's smile,  
That like a timid laughing maid  
Hath flown to hide her face  
Until the beldam whom she fears  
Shall pass upon her way.  
In vain the wandering eye  
Surveys the mountain and the misty vale  
For one lone spot of green  
Whereon to find relief  
From the cold dazzling snow :  
All sparkles bright around,  
Dreary, profoundly deep,  
Save where some pointed rock,  
Or precipice stupendous, rears aloft  
Its black and dismal wall,  
Frowning like Crime on gentle Innocence,  
That, robed in white, smiles calmly from beneath.

'Twas early morn when Pierre his cottage left  
In Campan's snowclad vale,

To track a foe whose claw-defended feet  
Had left the impress of their power and size  
Both far and near.

Untiring in exertion, afternoon  
Found the bold hunter distant from his home,  
But still no nearer to the prowling brute  
Whose death he sought.

In vain with anxious eyes he looks around—  
Ascends the cold grey rocks,  
Or peers into the chasm—  
Loses the track—recovers it,  
And wanders here and there.

Impatience and vexation from his lips  
At length find vent in words,  
And, muttering curses on the shaggy game,  
Reluctantly he yields the long pursuit  
And homeward turns his steps.

The chase hath led him to the giant ridge  
That hides sweet Luz, and near to Barège famed,  
Whose roofs, scarce rising 'bove the drifted snow,  
Beside the angry torrent might be seen  
Down in the deep, dark, dismal vale beneath.  
Both cold and bleak the dreary mountain waste  
On every side extends,  
And the sharp northern blast  
Uplifts its distant voice  
To howl hoarse warning in the traveller's ear.



But unappalled is Pierre,  
And onward wends his way,

Dreaming of home and Katinosse, his love,  
Whom he ere long will lead, a happy wife,  
To cheer his lone fireside.

Sudden he stops upon the yawning brink  
Of a tall precipice, and gazes down  
Into a gorge two thousand feet below—  
There, on the dazzling surface, closely grouped,  
A troop of Izards seek their scanty food

    Beneath the freezing snow.

    The hunter's bold heart leaps

    Within him at the sight !

And disappointment and his previous toil  
Are soon forgotten, both.

His gun is primed, and down upon the ground  
He drops, that thus he may observe unseen,  
And measure with his eye the space that lies  
Betwixt him and the game.

His brief inspection o'er, and settled how

    The quarry he'll attain,

He seeks to rise ; but horror ! in his haste

He took no heed of where he laid him down—

Perceived not ice beneath the slender crust

Of fresh fall'n snow that on a slight incline

    Attains the sudden brink

    Of the huge precipice—

And when he strives his feet once more to gain  
Onward he slowly slides !

A dreadful truth hath flasht before his eyes—

He's lost ! for ever lost !

Wildly with starting eyes he glares around !

The gun slips from his grasp,

Glides on a space—is gone !

He spreads his arms—with eager nails essays

To dig into the surface—all in vain !

They clutch but yielding snow !

They glance from the ice !

His feet fail to hold !

Onward he swiftly glides !

Then from his lips a ringing, maddening yell

Breaks the stern solitude. . . The brink is past !!

Into the dreadful yawning gulf

Headlong, alas ! he falls,

Over and over turns

Until both sense and breath have fled !—

Oh wretched, hapless Pierre,

A fearful fate is thine !

Lo ! half way down the rugged precipice

A stunted oaken bush,

With others, from a narrow ledge

Puts forth its strong and matted boughs :—



O, wondrous to relate !

The hunter's crimson sash

And vest entangle with the branches, and

His death-fall is arrested suddenly.

Poor Pierre ! what thoughts are thine

When breathing and perception both return

Roused by the fearful shock !

At first his awe-struck eyes

Can nothing see around—

Can nothing comprehend.

Pale horror with a vacant stare

Possesses them ; and then by slow degrees

The fact dawns on his mind

(A cheering blessed sun

Thawing the ice of fear)

That he yet lives, may yet be saved !

But how ? kind Heaven ! how ?

For midway down he hangs—

Above him rises the appalling height !

Deep, deep beneath him yawns the white  
abyss !

Around no hold for mortal foot !

And one unguarded motion

Might break the frail support,

And Death in its cold shroud

Receive his mangled limbs.

Oh horrible ! too horrible is this !  
And still more dreadful to his mind the thought  
That thus he may hang on  
For hours 'twixt life and death !  
Or die by inches, cold and hunger both  
Assailing him.—Yes, better far is death  
In one dread plunge than agony prolonged  
To tortures such as these.  
The criminal, condemned,  
May for the final moment string his nerves  
To meet his awful fate ;  
But comes unsought reprieve,  
Extending life, not saving it at last,  
False hopes of manhood rob him, and he dies  
Shrieking for mercy when the knell is rung.

Around the hunter throws  
His anxious, starting eyes,  
To learn the nature true  
Of his position dire—  
Too soon he sees ! too well he understands !  
The hope of life that blazed so lately o'er him,  
Great as the sun itself,  
Now dwindles to a star,  
Feeble and waning dim.  
A sob, a groan of woe  
Bursts from his pale blue lips,

And from his brow the sweat by anguish drawn  
Falls drop by drop into the cold white gulf  
That mocks his torture with its aspect calm !

He did not fear to die.—

How oft, how freely had he risked his life  
In battle short and fierce,  
With the grim angry bear !  
Had heard his savage growls  
Unmoved, when others quailed,  
And fled the horrors of that dire embrace  
From limbs of giant might !

Such terrors filled his heart with eager joy,  
And would again—Oh ! give him but the chance  
Of such a glorious combat ! . . . But to hang  
Thus helpless in his misery,  
And gaze upon the spectre-form of Death  
Waiting below, is horror such as thought  
Can scarce conceive—imagination paint !

He shouts, he shrieks aloud !  
The rocks return the cry,  
The lonely snow-clad rocks,  
In echoes long repeated, and again  
That frightful silence reigns,  
More terrible to bear than all the pangs  
Of conscience to the stricken murderer.

Again his voice resounds and dies away  
Unanswered, and unheard  
By mortal ear upon that dreary waste  
Of mountain, ice, and snow.  
Grown hoarse and faint, he ceases soon to shout;  
The cold benumbs his limbs and iron frame,  
And seem to pierce his bones.  
E'en as he looks below  
Strange shapes arise out of the hollow gloom;  
Black shattered rocks, like legendary fiends,  
In hideous forms seem crowding round their prey.  
He notes them all—he counts them one by one;—  
How long have they been there? And, if he fell,  
Would that sharp point he sees  
Run through him like a two-edged sword?  
Kill him outright? 'Twere merciful! . . .

See! now a fire is burning bright,  
And cheering is the blaze  
From crackling fir-tree logs.  
Ah! well he knows the humble dwelling—  
His *own* in Campan's vale!  
And, seated by the hearth, his Katinosse  
Is sweetly smiling, calling him her Pierre!  
Great God! he hears her voice—  
He speaks . . . and in the act  
The happy vision fades—Where? where?—  
Can he not follow?—No!

Once more he shrieks to find himself alone  
Thus face to face with death !

An hour hath passed. To him an age it seems  
Full of dire agony.

If hell be like to this,

And spirits can experience pangs like these,

Its torments are indeed

Most terrible to bear.

Lo ! now another fear,

Born of the hideous past,

Hangs o'er him like a pall.

In twice the time that he hath suffered thus

The night will close its shroud around the scene,

And, image of his fate,

Envelope him for ever !

He prays that he may die !

Speedily !—speedily !

Yea, ere the night can come !

O Desolation ! awful is thy form,

Whether in nature thou art found,

Or in the embittered loneliness of man !

But when combined, as now, how doubly dire

Is to poor Pierre thy dreadful aspect !

He feels thy presence at his very heart

As thou sitt'st brooding o'er that fatal gulf !

Thou, all unknown to him—so light, so gay,

So full of life and hope  
But one short hour ago—thy freezing touch  
Hath driven him raving mad !  
Upon him, all ye fierce and howling winds !  
Rend him to pieces ! Let the hungry wolves  
Feast on his scattered limbs !  
What careth he ! Despair is now a friend,  
And stirs him into laughter  
At the pale spectre, Death !

His brain is burning. Yet another hour,  
A weary hour he hangs—  
Another age of pain  
To his worn mind and frame.  
Sudden above his head  
A rushing sound, as if of wings, is heard.—  
Is it an Angel sent from heaven down  
To comfort and to aid ?

What means that murmur falling on his ear ?  
And now a voice close at his side !—  
He turns his dizzy eyes, great Heaven ! they meet  
A human face !—a form of living man  
Suspended in mid air !

Sense fails him then ; he sees no more—  
Feels not the rope, securely round him fixed,  
Which draws him swiftly from his threatened grave  
To slow returning life.

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Long lay poor Pierre upon a feverish couch  
Tossing 'twixt life and death :  
Grateful he learned how Heaven indeed had sent  
Its angel to his aid in yon lone man,  
The wandering Hermit of the vale of Luz,  
Who, from a rock hard by,  
Beheld him sink into the dark abyss—  
Beheld the bush arrest him in his fall ;  
With steps which Pity winged had sped to Luz  
(By happy chance not far)  
For aid substantial in the stalwart arms  
Of ready, generous men.  
Himself he led them to the fearful scene,  
And taught them silently and surely then  
To lower their ropes and save their fellow man.

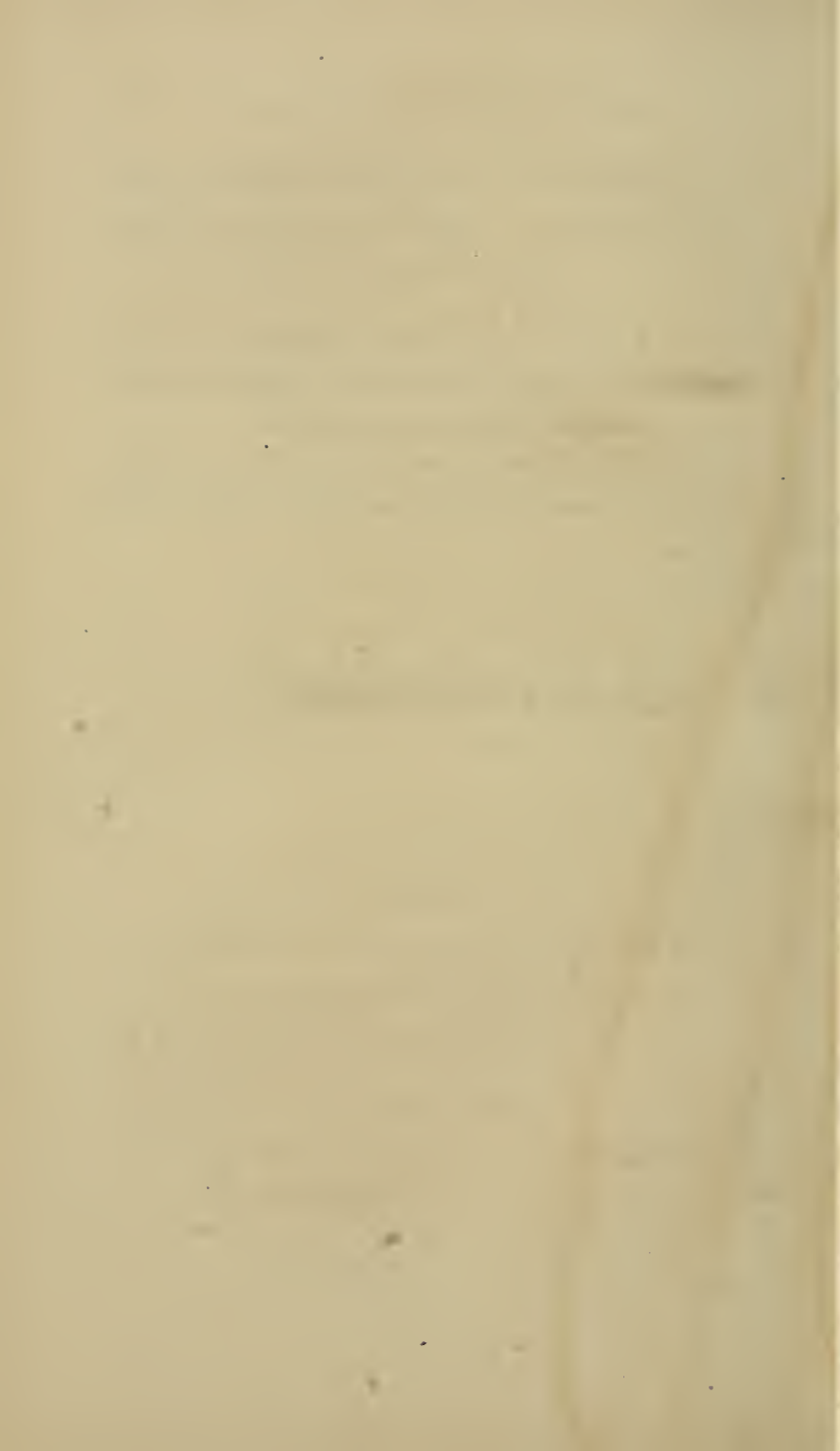
Led by the Hermit's never-failing care,  
In safety to his home they carried Pierre  
Over the snow-clad pass,  
Tourmallet stern, and through the vale of Grippe,  
And laid him gently on his lonely couch  
Beneath the roof where he was born and bred.  
And when the fever raged, and all around  
Made for their brother lamentation, came  
Ofttimes the Hermit, skilled to tend and soothe  
His hours of pain, and waken cheering hope.  
She, too, was there—his Katinosse, his own—  
With all a woman's love to hasten back

Upon his cheek the ruddy glow of health :  
And when it came her hand was clasped in his  
Never to be withdrawn !

Could he forget the Hermit ?  
Could *she* forget the hand that saved her Pierre ?  
All blessings rest with him !  
All they possess is his who gave to them  
Life, and the life-long bliss of mutual love !



THE VAL D'OSSEAU.



## IV.

WHITHER, O Hermit ! must we seek thee now ?  
 Last seen descending from thy lonely cell  
     In Luz's peaceful vale :  
     On mystic mission bent,  
 'Tis hard to follow where thy footsteps lead,  
     For scant repose is thine :  
 Yet would I wander with thee to the end  
 Of this, perchance, thy latest pilgrimage—  
     Hast thou not felt it such ?—  
 And, ere thy voice is hushed, revisit all  
     The scenes of bygone days ;  
 Feel o'er again what I have felt before,  
 Through thee and in thee, thou my spirit's tongue  
 Speaking from Nature to Eternity,  
 Its element and life. Welcome ! bright dreams  
 That cheer us on the way. Though comet-like  
     Ye rise upon the atmosphere  
 Of the cold world, to vanish soon from view,  
 Yet is there glory in your fiery train  
 That leaves its golden hue upon the mind,—  
 Portent or not to those who mark its flight.

How wonderful art thou,  
Subtlest of all things, Thought !  
Of what composed, what nature, who can say ?  
Ethereal, infinite !  
Spanning both earth and heaven  
With outstretched giant wings !  
Whether thou brood'st upon the outer deep,  
And mak'st it pregnant, or confin'st thee here  
Within the compass of the world, thou art  
In substance still the same—an unknown spark,  
A light, a shade, and unto feeble man  
Subservient yet superior.

He grasps thine airy form, and bids it fly,  
Or walk, or swim, or dive into the depths  
Beneath the girdled earth ; or with its aid,  
Seeks in the labyrinth of Science vast,  
And deep Philosophy, when Faith falls short,  
To solve the first great problem of the Soul.  
Offspring of Mind, thy source is in the light  
Immortal and eternal of that ONE  
Whose throne above the universe is Heaven !  
Could we but keep thee pure as from that Spring  
First issuing, obedient to the Word,  
And not defile thee with our earthly lusts  
And vain unworthy aims, how happy we !  
Too oft, alas ! perverted and debased,  
The grandeur of thine origin is lost,

Thy mission changed, and where thou shouldst  
support,  
Raise, and adorn mankind, thou art to them  
A minister of ill—an evil blight  
Poisoning where thou shouldst nourish and restore,  
Cursing where thou shouldst bless!

Fair Poesy!—to Thought the golden Spring,  
Whose perfumed waters, if she seek their charm,  
Can purify from every stain of earth—

Let thy sweet stream pour forth  
The fulness of its beauty once again!

Fair Poesy! there are who dare  
To reckon thee with things long past,  
Unsuited to this Age.—

Maid of the radiant Morn!

Thy fountain is not dry. I looked within  
And saw the blue of heaven reflected still  
Upon its sparkling face. They are but weeds  
The careless time hath cast into the channel;  
They may obstruct, but cannot choke its way,  
Soon, soon to vanish, as the gushing stream  
Rolls its harmonious course.

Vale of Osseau, thy smiles invite once more  
My wandering footsteps, and I fly to thee  
As to a well-loved friend.

Thou first of all didst greet my view  
When from the tinted plains I came  
To learn the marvels of the mountain world,  
To me unknown before.

Upon thy verdant pastures first my soul  
Felt the true joy that beauty can inspire ;  
And now the tribute that my memory owes  
I'd pay to thee in full.

I'll call thee fairest, 'mid so many fair,  
Save one, my Hermit's home ;  
That first, thou next in loveliness shalt hold  
The place thy merits claim.

So fresh, so smiling through thy varied length,  
Who enters thee indifferent to thy charms ?  
From teeming plains we come, whose bosoms bare  
Court the full ardour of that southern sun ;

And grateful are thy woods,  
Their bright green arches high above our heads,  
Extending long and wide, and all the air  
Oppressed with savour from unnumbered shrubs,  
Or modest flowers that fringe the tempting way.

Here all at once a vista opening shows  
Some peaceful cot secluded in a dell  
Where Daphne might have roamed and Phoebus  
woo'd,  
Or breathed soft music from his tuneful reed :

Where Innocence is born, and passes on  
From youth to age in simple rustic bliss,  
Contented with its quiet little world,  
Knowing no other, seeking nought beyond.  
A little further, and a limpid brook  
Hums in the gladdened ear its welcome lay,  
Now gaily laughs along, now hides away  
In amorous sport beneath the pendent flowers ;  
Or, bolder, leaping from the moss-clothed rock,  
Bursts into glittering spray, and showers around

Its healthful, cooling dew.

Anon some lofty peak the prospect crowns,  
Clothed with rich verdure to its highest point,

Or waving sprightly trees.

Naught terrible is there to blight the eye,

Or fill the soul with awe.

'Tis graceful beauty, all, and silently

Appealeth to our hearts.

And now the woods are passed, and other scenes  
New loveliness disclose.

Here fields of yellow corn, here pastures rich  
In herds and flocks, on either hand extend ;  
Here the neat cottage or the modest farm,  
High seated on the mountain's grassy side,

Or snugly in the vale ;

Here the proud chateau from its lofty site,



Full in the midst, looks down,  
 Upon whose ancient walls  
 Time hath writ legends of its younger days,  
 When court and hall resounded with the clang  
 Of arms and armour, and the Ladye fair  
 Smiled on her Knight from victory returned.

O noble, joyous vale !

Here roamed, great France, thy Henri of Navarre,  
 Who drew from Nature, in her grandest form,  
 The wisdom that distinguished later years.  
 How cherished still by every peasant heart  
 Is the proud memory of that royal name—  
 His people's "conqueror and father !"\*—Oft  
 They point to Pau, his birthplace, and Osseau,  
 The nursery of his youth, and with a sigh  
 Think on the hero's fate !

Vale of Osseau ! not only is thy name  
 For beauty known ; deep in thy verdant bosom  
 Hide those rich springs which yield, in generous flow,  
 Their charmèd floods, to nourish and restore.

Eauxbonnes, Eauxchaudes, ye both are there,  
 Pale hollow-eyed Consumption knows you well,  
 And grinds her yellow teeth with rage,  
 To think how oft from her rapacious jaws

\* "Et fut de ses sujets le vainqueur et le pere."

LA HENRIADE, chant i.



Her countless victims have by you been torn ;—  
Nor she alone, but all her sister plagues  
In haste from thy too healthful air retire,  
To glut their maws upon the swampy plain,  
Or the devoted city, cramped and foul.

The sun hath set, hath risen and set again,  
Since the lone Hermit looked upon the world  
From his own threshold in the vale of Luz ;  
And now at early morn his way he takes  
O'er Osseau's verdant meads,  
Bent on some holy mission.

He pauses not, but follows up the path,  
Oft trod before, which to Aosta leads.—  
Aosta, simple village far retired,  
Where industry and rural worth abide ;  
Hard by Eauxbonnes, down in the gorge below,  
Its scattered cots and ancient church appear :—  
And now he stops before the humble porch  
Of one lone tenement, and knocks.

A venerable man

Over whose head some threescore years have passed,  
And marked their passage by the silver threads  
That thickly lace his locks of raven hue,  
Soon at the threshold stands.

He sees the Hermit, and a flush of joy  
Heightens his care-worn cheek,  
As eagerly he welcomes him within :

“Oh, Father, we have prayed that thou mightst  
come,

And lo ! our prayers are answered. She is there,

And longs once more to hear thy voice :

Come, speak to her, and soothe the few short hours  
Of ebbing life—my Marie !—my lost child !”

“Ha ! say’st thou so ? I feared as much ;  
But be thou calm, if heaven so decrees.

Her life hath been a stormy one. Bless God  
That He now takes her to Himself in peace.”

So saying they approach

The inner room where, stretched upon her bed,

Poor hapless Marie lies :

She sleeps awhile, and all her previous life

Passes before her in a feverish dream.

Sad is the tenour of the tale it tells,

And stern the lesson which its truth conveys.

THE STORY  
OF  
**MARIE D'AOSTE.**



## V.

NOT in the gardens of the earth  
 Did Beauty first unfold  
 The glories of its presence.  
 Its bright ethereal spirit  
 Blooms on the boundless plains of Heaven!  
 E'en on the holy Mount,  
 The throne of light and life,  
 And majesty eternal, infinite—  
 Where angels hymn unceasing strains of praise  
 On sweet-toned golden harps—  
 E'en there it finds it home.  
 Thence streaming through the vast expanse of  
 Heaven  
 It shines upon the gathered hosts of saints,  
 Gilding their star-crowned brows, whereon  
 The seal of everlasting peace is fixed,  
 Faith's high reward;  
 Then issues from the sapphire gate  
 Through which those prayers ascend  
 That true hearts breathe,  
 And fills the universe around  
 With all those sparkling spheres

That shadow forth a future unto Man,  
And raise his thoughts above the prostrate  
world.

Inanimate, yet portion of the same  
Primeval loveliness,  
In Nature next 'tis seen  
Of every shape and hue :  
Now it is gentle, wooing in its form ;  
Now, sternly grand, it fills our hearts with awe ;—  
A graceful waving tree ; a modest flower ;  
An image of repose  
In some green quiet dell ;  
A mighty towering rock—  
A cataract that plunges o'er the neck  
Of some huge precipice—  
A mountain cleft in twain !  
Or in the glorious changing rainbow's arch,  
Uniting earth with heaven,  
The bright connecting link  
Made manifest between  
Body and Spirit—World, Eternity !

Lastly, in breathing, moving shape,  
O Man, it is thine own.  
Beauty in thee is greatness of the soul,  
And sovereignty of Reason ;  
And, joined to these, the outward noble form

Erect, and tall, the contour firm  
Of muscle and of limb :  
In likeness of Omnipotence itself,  
Thou walk'st the earth, to conquer and adore.

In thee, O Woman, more refined and pure,  
It blushes like the rose upon thy cheek,  
And from thy dark sweet eye  
Its lucid rays pour forth  
In soft, voluptuous streams.

Appear in all thine innocence,  
In all thy virgin truth,  
And, could Perfection dwell

Upon the earth as in the realms above,  
Thou to contain it wert the vessel meet !  
Thy form is living loveliness !  
And round thy polished limbs  
A thousand bashful graces play.

Thy tresses are a veil

Beneath whose ample shade young Pleasure hides,  
Joined with sweet Modesty, his fitting mate.

So looked the Mother of mankind,  
Fresh from her Maker's hands ;

Her form was of the earth, but in her eyes  
The glories of a brighter region shone !

At meek Aosta, in the Val d'Osseau,  
From tenderest years the graceful Marie grew ;

And, like some beauteous plant but scant'ly known,  
Whose every shoot doth with its age disclose  
Some beauty new, so to the watchful eyes  
Of those around the gentle Maid revealed  
    New charms each fleeting year.  
    Scarce eighteen summers passed,  
    And all throughout the vale—  
From high Eauxbonnes, perched in her eaglet's nest,  
Down to its threshold on the *Gave* of Pau—  
    Confess fair Marie queen  
    Unrivalled, unapproached.

Behold where now she stands  
Beside yon crystal pool,  
Whose tranquil purity,  
Unruffled by the wild, ungentle wind,  
    Sleeps like true innocence—herself!  
    Oh, what a native grace  
    Beams in that rounded form,  
That perfect moulded nature, unadorned,  
    Uncramped by bastard Art!  
    What power is in that eye,  
    Whose fires e'en thro' the fringe  
Of silken lashes force their way!  
    Yet modesty is there,  
    For, lo! how soon they droop  
    And all advance repel,  
    Dare you look into them.



Her lips, like rosy fruit, bloom on their tree,  
That Passion hungers for with flaming eyes,  
But chaster Love claims as his rightful due—  
Ah! happy one whom destiny reserves  
    To banquet on their sweetness.

I see thee, Marie, even now,  
Through the thin film that envious Time,  
Consumer of all beauty, draws  
    Before thy matchless form :  
I see thee in the fullness of thy bloom,  
    The idol of the vale,  
The wondrous rose among the rocks  
    Whose perfume fills the air.  
I hear the stranger still pronounce thy name  
    With eulogy, and point  
    Unto the spot that gave thee birth.  
I hear thy native brethren with delight  
    Count thy perfections o'er,  
And marvel 'mong themselves which man of men  
    Shall win so sweet a prize.

Thy mother's breast o'erflows with joy and pride  
To mark such homage as thy beauty wins.  
    Her only darling one,  
She loves to see thee in thy best attire,  
Simple and picturesque, on festive day,  
    Concentrate, like a sun,

The beams from every eye around ;  
And when to dance some swain allures  
Thy ever willing feet,  
How the applause thy graceful movements wake  
Thrills through her gladdened heart—  
The happiest woman in the valley she !

With colder glance thy father looks  
Upon the joyous scene.  
He was a soldier stern,  
Tried on the battle plain,  
Ere back he turned him to his native hills,  
With his young wife and child,  
To till his little field and dwell in peace.  
He knows too well the world,  
Its perils and its snares ;  
And Marie is the jewel of his heart,  
The pride and joy of his declining years !  
He likes not all this homage, for he knows  
How Flattery's subtle coil  
Winds round a heart so young.

Alas ! 'tis not without good cause  
This fear reigns in his breast,  
And robs him of all peace.  
Amongst the eager, swelling crowd  
Of strangers and of swains  
Who revel in the light

Of Marie's matchless charms,  
His quick eye soon perceives  
One of superior presence to the rest,  
Whose manners speak refinement and high blood ;  
From whose too fluent tongue  
Seductive eloquence,  
Clothed in the garb of flattery,  
Pours an unceasing honied stream.  
With a deep, inward pang  
Poor Marie's father sees  
Her eye flash with too bright a fire  
As those soft dangerous words,  
Like false fiends decked in golden liveries,  
Steal through the unbarred portals of her ears  
To desecrate the temple of her mind.

How earnestly he, in his Marie's cause,  
Pleads to her mother, and with graphic tongue  
Depicts the danger lurking for the child!—  
Shows how, tho' pure as light,  
And beautiful as pure,  
This adulation offered at the shrine  
Of her surpassing charms—  
This fast far-spreading fame—  
May bring its curse upon their happy home.  
Why teach her virgin heart  
To prize the accents of beguiling praise,  
And court temptation in her million forms ?

The very angels fell, and so may she !  
Withdraw her then from idle gaping crowds  
That gaze with lustful eyes—  
From that too favored one !—  
Yea, save her e'er it be too late to save !

Thus wisely flow his words ;  
But in the breast where they should rouse alarm  
Befitting to their import, they excite  
High indignation and unruly pride.  
Reproachful and unseemly from her lips  
Her hasty language flows :  
What need to school her thus ?  
She knew her duty well as he knew his,  
And, thank great Providence, could guard her child  
From all these fancied ills  
With or without his aid !  
Withdraw the girl, forsooth, from public gaze ?  
She gloried in her charms,  
And in their wide-spread fame—  
Ay, felt a pride a parent feels  
In such a boon from heaven  
As Marie was to them ;—  
She prays him lock his fears within his breast  
And never fret her with such shadows more.

To this rough speech her prudent spouse forbears  
Reply, revolving ever in his mind

The only course his sense of right approves.  
Meanwhile the fame of Marie's beauty spreads  
Wider each day, and she with childish joy  
    Perceives the envied height  
To which it hath upraised her, feeling not  
    The peril that attends it.  
So waves the flower upon the glacier's edge  
In fancied safety from impending ruin—  
So thrives the tree upon the torrent's brink,  
Proudly and cheerfully, until it falls  
And finds its foe in what it deemed a friend.

How oft desire to work out some good end  
Misguides our steps, and hurries on the evil  
    That we would most avoid !  
E'en as the mariner, whose watchful eye  
Perceives some danger, straight consults his chart  
Whereon the tracks are marked, but chooses one  
Which seems to clear it by a shorter course—  
Vain all his caution; lo ! the rocks appear,  
And wreck him when he deemed the peril past !  
Thus with poor Marie. In his eager haste  
To save her, as he thinks, her father (deaf  
To all entreaty) suddenly declares  
    That she must for a time  
    Bid an adieu to home.

At Pau his brother lives, to whose strict guard  
He will commit his daughter. Against this

Her mother clamours loudly, but in vain,  
And Marie drops a tear, but murmurs not.

The next day she is gone.

The Val d'Osseau hath lost its sweetest maid—  
The fairest pearl that e'er the mountains  
owned,  
Torn from its setting, now adorns the plain.

O Marie, had thy young heart found  
Within thy native vale some worthy one  
To bless with all its love,  
Much after misery hadst thou been spared !  
But forth thou wentest in thy pride of beauty—  
Too soon, alas ! that beauty proves thy bane,  
And down thou fallest, never more to rise !

Why here repeat the tale

So often told, so threadbare worn,  
How the seducer, baffled for a time,  
Discovered thee too soon, and won thine ear  
With flattery's tinsel phrase and hollow vows,  
Till all thy scruples, one by one, o'ercome,  
He bears thee off in triumph from thy friends,  
Grief-stricken and dismay'd !—

Enough to tell the fatal truth

That thou, alas ! didst fall !

Let Pity cast her veil upon thy guilt ;  
But thy repentance, like the sunset ray,  
Shall leave its tint upon thy fading hours.



Two years pass heavily away—

No news of Marie to Aosta comes.

The strangers, knowing her in happier times,

Inquiry make when passing on their way

Through the bright Val d'Osseau,

And hear the burden of the saddening tale.

The peasant points to her once happy home,

And tells how sorrow broke

Her mother's once proud heart,

Leaving her father desolate

To mourn the hour when, in his anxious haste,

He dared entrust her to another's care.

Two years pass heavily away.

Pale Winter's snows are melting fast from view

In the deep vale and on the mountains' sides,

Beneath the genial smile of Spring.

The Hermit issues from his peaceful cell

To wander forth, as is his wont,

Upon his unknown way.

Through Argelès, a valley wide and fair,

Well known to fame, he shapes his silent course,

In meditation rapt ;

And soon he nears its northern bound,

Where gapes a pass, the solitary route

Far winding down to ancient Lourdes ;

When suddenly a woman from a cottage,

That in its little garden stands hard by,

Springs forth to meet him, and with humble prayer  
Entreats to walk within and blessing give  
To a poor stranger sickness hath o'erta'en

Beneath their modest roof.

He bows assent and follows where she leads.  
Distress ne'er pleaded unto him in vain.

In a low chamber, on a pallet mean,  
The sufferer lies, a tall and way-worn girl,  
The perfect contour of whose prostrate form—  
The classic head—the dark and flashing eyes—  
The well cut mouth—proclaim, alas! the truth;—

'Tis Marie, once the pride,

The idol of Osseau.

Still beautiful, but, oh! how fallen now  
From what she was but two short years before!  
Grief, like a blight, hath stricken the fair tree  
And scathed it in its bloom—its better life—

Its dearest hopes—its all!

• Like the wan spectre of Despair itself

She hangs 'twixt life and death,

And loathes the past, but dreads what is to  
come.

With tearful smile the mystic man she hails,  
Whose gracious words fall gently in her ear,  
And pour their balm upon her troubled spirit.  
E'en as she listens, lo! another day



Appears to dawn upon the dreary night  
Of her dejection. Blessed be his voice !  
All is not gone from her ; some light remains  
To cheer the darkened path beyond the world.

To him with eager haste

She tells the story of her woful fall—

And how she early felt

The fulness of her loss—

How soon, when sated with his virgin prey,  
The smooth deceiver in the villain merged ;  
And, when she murmured, bade her hold her peace.

Or to another sell

The charms she so much prized !—

Where were his vows of lasting, faithful love ?  
Oh, when he spoke these words, how she abhorred  
Her wretched self and him !

Gay Paris was the scene

Of her brief reign of guilt.

Did she enjoy it whilst it lasted ?—No !

The worm gnawed at her heart,

And she awoke, as from a dream,

To find herself the hateful thing she was.

Around her Pleasure, like the ocean, rolled

Through the vast channels of that gorgeous town.

And Wealth and Splendour on its surface shone—

It dashed its glittering spray

In jewels over her !

With horror she recoiled,  
And shook them off at last, and fled !  
Whither she cared not, could she but escape  
From him who had betrayed her—from the world,  
From the dread frown of an offended God,  
And (would that such could be !)  
From her vile conscience-stricken self !

Among the mountains once she had a home—  
A tranquil, happy home,  
Where her first childhood passed.  
She had a father and a mother fond,  
Who both then loved her, and with joyful pride  
Beheld her beauty from the bud expand  
Into the full-blown, perfect flower.  
Sullied and faded, would they own her now ?  
Would they e'en look upon her ? No !  
To them she never, never can return !  
But in some desert spot must lay her bones  
Where the cold blast shall howl its dismal dirge  
Over the lost one's grave !

Thus the fierce tumult in her troubled soul  
Once more awakes ; but soon the Hermit's voice,  
With dulcet tone, to calmness soothes it down,  
And then it sleeps, as doth the placid lake  
Lulled by the soft breath of a summer's eve :  
The stars that gem the glorious dome of heaven

Reflected shine within its bosom deep ;  
E'en so her mind upon its tranquil face  
Reflects the lustre of his heavenly thoughts.  
This good work done, the gracious man departs,  
And toward Osseau with swiftest pace he speeds :  
There seeks her father in his lonely cot,  
And bids him come, and in God's holy name  
Receive his erring but repentant child.

Not hard the task to lead him to her arms.  
With unchecked joy he hears the welcome news  
Of her unhoped return ;  
And for her sin, the pains she hath endured  
Are chastisement enough.  
That ere she fell from her once happy state  
Of innocence and beauty was, alas !  
(O woe ! that such confession should be his !)  
His error—his the blame—  
Had he less hasty been,  
But kept her like a jewel next his heart,  
And not dismissed her to another's care,  
He had not grown into  
The grief-worn wretch he was !  
But he was struck with fear  
At the wide homage that her charms obtained,  
And sought to save her from o'erweening pride  
By one stern, timely blow.  
Great Heaven pardon him,

If evil sprang from his intended good!—  
He sought to rescue, not to lose his child.

Yet a short while, and Marie once again  
Feels her fond father clasp her to his heart,  
With words of comfort and forgiveness kind.

He bids her live to cheer  
The remnant of his days,  
And from her thoughts dismiss  
The hateful memory of the bitter past.

Alas! her mother's voice  
Joins not with his to urge this gentle prayer.  
Her voice hath long been hushed, too soon she learns;  
And for a time the thought that her misdeeds  
Had cut the thread of that dear parent's life  
O'erwhelms her; but at length,  
Her father's love regained, the Hermit's care,  
Upraise her once again.

By slow degrees unto her weakened frame  
Some strength returns that barely may suffice  
To take her back into her native vale,  
Scene of far happier days!

Her childhood's home!  
Once more she stands within its humble walls;  
But what a change a few short months have  
wrought—  
Not in its aspect, *that* is still the same—  
In her own self!

There is her room ; the bed whereon she lay  
And slept the sleep of innocence and peace ;  
There the small crucifix against the wall,  
And, close beneath, the Blessèd Virgin's smile.  
There hangs the glass upon whose truthful face  
Her own was mirrored in its loveliness,

Its purity !

She dare not look upon it now,  
For it would show in characters too plain

The havoc sin hath made.

All is the same as in that happy time  
Too swiftly fled, and every object round  
Conveys reproach until her burdened heart

Pours forth its anguish at her eyes

In floods of burning tears.

Oh, that such tears could wash away

The past, and all its memories !

The mountain stream sweeps o'er its pebbly bed,  
Chafes at its bounds, and from their contact grows  
Sullied awhile, but soon runs pure again !

But if life's troubled stream contract a stain,  
Unto the ocean of eternity

In all its foulness it is hurried on !

Our conscience is a book

Wherein our faults are registered ;

And angels turn away,

And veil their faces, whilst the fiends rejoice—

With greedy, jealous eyes they watch and wait  
To add a new impeachment to the list.

Time passes swiftly on :  
The sun shines brightly o'er the Val d'Osseau ;  
Its children's hearts are glad,  
For Plenty smiles upon them in their fields,  
And Peace and Happiness are theirs within.  
But in poor Marie's breast  
Reigns bitter desolation.

No sun can warm her into joy again—  
No smiles recall the blighted rose of health,  
And playful youth, to those pale features more.  
She flies the festive scenes,  
Where she was once the queen,  
And seeks the lonely wood, the quiet dell,  
Or her still chamber : there she at least may give  
Vent to the hidden agony  
Which will gush forth, consuming as it comes !

In vain her father and her pitying friends  
Crowd anxious round her, seeking to dispel  
The fatal cloud that on her spirit rests.  
From the dread Past she cannot draw her eyes  
To lose it in the Present—*still 'tis there!*  
The woful thought that poisons her young life—  
Yes, *still 'tis there! . . . .*  
Oh for a draught of Lethe's cooling wave  
To her parched lips !—



Forgetfulness ! then death, if it must be ;  
But thought is torment, and she still must think !

A saddening sight it is  
To watch decay creep o'er this mortal frame,  
E'en when the measure of our years is full :

But sadder still to mark  
Its withering, fatal hand,  
On youth and beauty in their pride of bloom.

The mighty maw of Death  
Is full of this rich food, but still

Unsated, aye he craves

For more ; and more are his.

Poor, hapless Marie ! many years too soon

He bends his bow at thee,

And the dread arrow quivers in thy breast.

The blow is struck ! No healing for such wound !

She sinks ! she sinks ! the wretched father sees

And cannot save his child !

Oh, why restore her to him—

Why stir his heart with joy,

Only to break it thus ?

Alas ! the curse is still upon the hour

In which he sent her forth.

For now that he would keep her to himself

To cheer the twilight of his woful life,

Death snatches her away.

A short time back, and day appeared to dawn ;  
But night is lowering thicker than before,  
And he must wander in the dark alone !

The generous Hermit from his distant cell  
At intervals appears. To that sad home  
His coming is a cheering beam from heaven,  
Piercing the clouds that intervene  
To hide the brighter glories of the future.  
They hang upon his words that breathe of peace :  
And chiefly she who feels her hour at hand.  
In his mild accents naught of threatened doom,  
No awful images arise—  
No talk of death eternal, or the pains  
Of unconsuming fires.  
He never spoke of death, or taught its fear,  
But raised the drooping soul from earth to heaven !  
His eyes had long been opened to a Truth  
Which spurns corruption and the grave :—  
Rapt in the glory of that brighter promise,  
He waits, he hopes, and if, meanwhile, death come,  
'T is like a sleep unvexed by troubled dreams  
Betwixt a dreary day  
And an unfading morrow !—  
O happiness supreme,  
'Mid all poor Marie's crushing woes, to hear  
Such godlike accents from the lips of man !



The mystic hour of sleep has come for her—  
The two lone watchers stand beside her couch,  
Gazing upon her as she prostrate lies  
In the still chamber : even as they watch  
    Those once so lustrous eyes  
    Now wearily unclose,  
And a sweet smile plays on her pale blue lips,  
    That part as if to speak,  
    But no words issue forth ;  
    One deep-drawn sigh escapes,  
And on its airy wings the spirit soars  
From the poor, blighted, earthly tenement  
    To meet its God and Judge.

That night there was a silence in each home,  
And hearts were heavy in the Val d'Osseau.  
    The rising moon, full-orbed,  
Through one small casement throws her silver  
    beams  
Upon the placid features of the dead,  
And on the grey locks of a lone old man  
    Who crouches by the side  
    Of her to him so dear !  
His head is bowed upon his heaving breast,  
And to and fro he rocks,  
As his grief sways him ever—  
Or only stops to chase

The fly that fain would settle  
Upon that pallid cheek !  
He weeps not, for his grief  
Is deep and hot within him,  
And sears his tearless eyes. . . . .  
Oh ! it is terrible  
To feel a desolation such as his !

**THE PEAK OF BAGNIERES.**



## VI.

STRANGER ! lov'st thou to feel  
 The chilling kisses of the Queen of night ?  
     There is a glory in her reign,  
     Though she look pale and sick  
     As Fear or blighted Hope.  
 I've watched her shine upon the mighty deep,  
 Tipping with silver all its crested waves,  
 And thought upon the wide, tumultuous world,  
 And the dark workings of its secret breast—  
     Its plottings, wiles, and mischief.  
 I've seen her light upon a broad blue lake,  
     Whose waveless waters slept  
     As do the minds of those  
     Who find in death a friend,  
     Rest all their aim on earth,  
     No hope in heaven beyond !—  
 I've seen her shine upon the monuments  
     Of some old sculptured race,  
 And bring their hoary beauty forth to view,  
 Till every fretted angle told its tale  
     Of the great buried Past.  
 So the old warrior, or the storied sage,

In the calm moonlight of his latter days,  
Relates the wonders of the early time,  
Which show still greater through this silvery veil.

I will not wrong thee, O mysterious Night !  
And draw comparisons with joyous Day ;  
Let each live in itself ; the one all smiles  
Like thoughtless youth,—the other sombre, grave.  
As best becomes the elder of the twain.

Thine age who dares to guess ?

Thou with thy brothers grim,

Chaos and Space, wast never young,  
And Limit hath no name in thy domain.

A million unknown spheres might lose their way  
Left they their thrones to wander through thy  
shades.

One power, O Night, can compass thee.—

One power, O Night, can conquer thee—

He said, “ Let there be light ! ”

And at His will the new-created ray  
Sprang from thy bosom, then first taught to feel  
Dismay that for a time your reigns should be  
Alternate—henceforth thou must yield him all !

Yes, dark-browed, ancient Night, though black thy  
frowns,

And terrible sometimes, thou hast thy charm  
In measured portion with the gorgeous day.  
Sated with lustre from the flaming sun,

How sweet the shelter of thine ebon wing,  
In the soft lap of sleep !

How sweet for him, who toils from early dawn  
To wring a pittance out of pampered Wealth,  
Or cold, stern Avarice, to feel thy shades  
Creep o'er him, granting kindly interval  
From the long, weary task !

How sweet for her who counts each lingering hour  
Of the long day, and dreams of love and bliss,  
To find them both in thee. Sweet unto him,  
Whose soul is in some mystic science rapt,  
Are thy kind, silent hours, and the pale lamp  
That sheds its halo o'er the realms of Thought.

I will not hate thee, Night,  
Though Crime may hide her in thine ample cloak,  
And stalk abroad to ravage and destroy.  
I will not hate thee, though men stain thy bosom  
With their foul acts and treasons : let *them* bear  
The hellish stigma ! thou, the looker-on  
And favourer perforce.

I will not hate thee, Night, but call thee kind  
And generous to men—to me most kind !  
Beneath the shadow of thy giant wings  
I lay me down to sleep, and visions float  
Before my spirit's ever wakeful eyes  
Of mystic seeming, which, with early dawn,  
Spring into life. Bright forms ! more palpable  
Than may appear from your fantastic dress,



Truth hides within you, and my weary heart  
Is soothed into endurance by your smiles.

O gracious, friendly Night !  
Would we awaken to thy majesty,  
'Tis not within the densely peopled hell  
Men call a city, whence they shock thine ear  
With their mad riot and ungodly deeds,  
But in the peaceful, far-removèd plain,  
Or where the mountain pythons of the earth  
Point their proud crests to heaven !  
'Tis there we know thee in thy regal state  
And comprehend thy power.  
There, too, O Queen, that 'mid a blaze of jewels  
On a rich robe, hang'st like the modest opal—  
There, too, we view thee in thy silvery pride  
Of beams that emulate the fiercer sun.  
And the rich clustering stars!—those watchful  
eyes  
Of myriads of bright angels—how they gem  
The raven tresses of the old King Night,  
Adding fresh lustre to his diadem !

The world profoundly sleeps  
After its many toils,  
Wrapped closely in the mantle of the dark—  
If dark indeed you call  
A spectre of midday,  
Clothed in bright silver beams.

The giants of Bigorre  
In serried ranks stand forth,  
And cast their mighty shades  
Far o'er the silent plains,

Like the famed oracles of ancient days  
Searching the clouded future.

Above all other, looms  
Into the moonlit air,  
Bagnieres, thine ice-crowned peak,  
The sovereign of its range,

Whose sparkling crest for forty leagues around  
Makes its great presence known !

What figure moving up those rugged slopes,  
Now wrapped in shadow, now in light displayed,  
Salutes our startled gaze ?—

What reckless wretch thus lonely in the night  
Seeks doom inevitable ? Mark it well !

That form is not of earth ! Its face is pale—  
It glides upon the rocks and glittering ice !  
No human footstep e'er so swift, so sure !

And now it gains the summit where it stands  
And, statue-like, awaits—

O wonderful to see !

It is no phantom form—'tis mortal !—'tis  
The wanderer of the mountains—the lone man  
Of Luz's distant vale.

Why comes he there while sleeps the prostrate  
world ?—

“Lo ! from this point I overlook the earth,  
And, first of men, shall hail the morning’s light—

To me blest privilege !

Thus would I ever hail it—ever watch  
For the first streak of dawn.

In bygone ancient days  
So stood the Prophet on the hill of Faith  
Down gazing through the stormy night around ;  
And, while all slept, or heeded not his voice,  
Proclaimed the terrors of the coming time !

Ye, too, profoundly sleep,  
O people ! ’neath my feet,  
Unmindful of the morrow, as of yore.  
When will ye learn to wake, and watch, and  
feel

That which is soon to come—  
Which is e’en now so near  
That it may take you in the lap of sleep !

“Thou glorious heavenly arch !  
I gaze upon thy majesty to-night  
For the last time from this exalted stand.  
The Angel’s whisper passed into my ear,  
As I ascended, that my feet no more  
Should leave their impress on the Monarch’s crown.  
May all who follow read in thy bright book,  
Lit by yon wondrous stars, what I have read  
So oft before, and may they be prepared

Even as I am now.

Be merciful, O Heaven !

Give them the peace that filleth all my soul—  
Which I knew not until I learnt thy ways,  
And clomb the mountain nearer unto Thee !”

He ceased to speak, and for a while his head  
Drooped on his ample chest :

He raised it soon, and with his eye of power  
He pierces the deep shadows of the night.

Long stood he thus ;

His form defined against the southern sky,  
Distinct and clear,

In its proportions rose more vast than nature.

So Destiny,

From some huge pinnacle untrod by man,

Broods o’er the plastic world,

Hatching fresh change and turmoil while it sleeps  
In false security !

Athwart the face of night a change comes on  
Perceptible, though gradual, like the light  
Of truth that steals into the stubborn heart ;  
At first a spark, then rising to a flame  
Triumphant and eternal.

Pale is the silver moon ;

More wan, more pale now shows her queenly brow,  
As at her heart some bitter grief were gnawing.

The stars, too, that before  
So thickly spangled all the dome of heaven,  
Wax fainter and retire,  
Like wearied watchers, to refresh their strength  
For lengthened vigils new.

The Hermit's eyes upon the east are fixed  
With steadfast gaze, as though some cherished hope,  
Long buried there, was soon to be revealed;  
And in that region doth the solemn blue  
Of heaven dissolve into a gentle grey—  
(The tint that in this world some choose to call  
The robe of Piety, which Sin assumes  
When she repents her of her past misdeeds :—  
How many use this seeming saintly cloth,  
Deceiving others and not less themselves !)

And now a warmer flush,  
So delicately pure  
That with it naught of earth hath rivalry.  
It deepens then in hue,  
Like the fresh summer rose,  
Emblem of innocence and virgin love  
Unstained by contact foul with earthly guile.

O truly happy state !  
Which many know not, or who, knowing, leave  
Too soon for that which brings  
With wider range of knowledge evil seeds,  
Producing in the end their rotten fruit—

In lieu of Peace, Discomfort, Pain,  
Uncertainty, Confusion, Sin,  
And its dread offspring, Death !

Yet brighter glows the east !  
As grim old Night his sable chariot turns,  
And whips his steeds into the farthest west—

Brighter and brighter still !

Each moment is a messenger,  
Clothed with new beauty from the sun,  
That rushes forth upon the sleeping world,  
Full of glad tidings of his near approach :

He comes, he comes, he comes !

Up and receive him in your best attire

O ever-varying Nature !

Ye fertile plains ! ye high aspiring hills !  
Give him due honour in return for all  
The beauty and the wealth ye win from him  
In multiplied abundance. Man alone,  
Unmindful and ungrateful, sleeps !

Bigorre, thou mountain king !  
Thy crown of ice will soon be molten gold—  
And thy huge brethren, too, shall take their share  
Of the fast rising splendours  
Long ere the lower world can tear away  
Its misty veil. He comes !—Hail glorious sun !—



He rises to thy view, O man of heaven !

Crowning the Monarch's crown.

The streams of light are, to thy spirit's glance,  
A pathway forming to the realms of day !—

Unequalled, wondrous scene !

Can pen of man depict thee ? Can weak words,  
Though fraught with passion of the Poet's soul,  
Imbue the minds of others with the sense  
Of thy o'erwhelming beauty ? Vain the task !

Go ye who have the gift

Of God within ye for the great, the grand—  
Follow the Hermit—stand where he now stands,  
And drink, nay, revel, where he revels now !

The sun is risen, and the night hath fled—  
The night beneath whose sable mantle lie  
The sins and secrets of yon drowsy world—

The sun hath risen high,

And in his sea of living light .

The mountains bathe their brows,  
And from their flanks unwrap the vapoury shroud

Which evening winds around them.

Beyond the utmost bounds of mortal vision  
Thy plains, Bigorre, now lay their beauty bare,  
Smiling and blushing, like sweet maidens coy  
For the first time in loveliness revealed.

Amid their beauty doth full many a town

Arrest the wandering eye ;



In vain it hovers o'er the vast expanse,  
And strains its utmost might;  
Grey distance mocks its efforts and retires  
Beyond the blue horizon.  
Such wondrous scene as this  
Should wake in dullest brain the holy life  
Of Poesy—and from the inner depths  
Of coldest hearts call forth both love and praise.  
Lo! how its power within the Hermit works,  
As down he gazes from his lofty throne,  
The Monarch mountain's crown.  
His eyes dilate, his face all flushed with fire  
From the rapt soul, and thus his words pour forth  
In swift, melodious stream :—

“Eternal Fountain of all living light!  
From heaven Thy glory through yon rising orb  
Revives this thankless earth.  
How wearily she lay  
Beneath the shadow of impending night  
A few short hours ago!  
And now, how eagerly she drinks thy beams  
At every teeming pore!  
How wondrous are Thy works!  
These mountains and yon plains  
That stretch so far away—  
Whose beauty fills my spirit  
E'en to o'erflowing—these are Thine!

This air, so fresh and pure,  
That stirs my snow-streaked locks  
And plays upon my cheek  
Buoyant and healthful, doth proclaim  
Thy grace and mercy unto all mankind!  
This sun, whose early beams  
Now raise the vapours of the night, and spread  
Their light refulgent to the utmost verge  
Of the far blue horizon,  
These all breathe of Thy spirit and Thy power.  
Unmeasured, unapproached !

“ O favoured, happy clime !  
Whose fertile breast the scantiest toil repays  
With tenfold gain. Unlike the barren north,  
Where toil and sweat are oft profusely spent  
To win the meanest pittance from the earth,  
And sometimes *that* denied.  
Thrice happy, happy clime !  
For all this bounty which His hand bestows,  
The note of praise should rise at earliest dawn,  
And fill the air with melody divine.  
But ye, alas ! are mute,  
People forgetful of these precious gifts,  
And sleep when ye should wake !

“ O world that I have left,  
And now behold so far beneath my feet,

For the last time, perchance, I speak to thee!—  
Sore hast thou laboured to bring forth thy fruit,  
And sorer still thy travail shall become.  
Much shall be wasted; much that seemeth good  
For offering shall rejected be, and cast  
Aside as emptiness, amid the wreck  
Of matter and of men.

“Is the work done, O Nations! which was set  
For you to do, each in your own degree?—  
Doth Order, eldest born of Heaven, and sent  
With his meek spouse, Obedience, here below  
To reign with Peace and Plenty, hand in hand—  
Doth he abide and hold his sovereign sway,  
As first designed? Alas! proud man!  
Thou hast unstrung the first great harmony!  
And Discord and Confusion, in its stead,  
Show their vile birth and parentage  
In their yet baser progeny.

“Thou mighty, gorgeous realm,  
Whose limit northward is the narrow sea  
Crossed by the first great Cæsar! thou art fair  
To look upon, and valorous as fair;  
But all thy valour and thy beauty are  
As naught, because misused.  
Why conquer others if thou hast not learned  
To rule thyself within?

How vain that outward show, that clash of arms,  
That loud high-sounding tongue which thunders  
forth

The fame of thy past deeds—how vain!  
Hast thou reformed mankind, adventurous France?  
Laid the foundations of an edifice

Which shall outlive these latter days?  
Thou hast cast kingdoms down, and thine own kings  
Hast spurned and humbled, to no worthy end.  
Woe unto thee! Thou hast offended Heaven!  
Perverting all its laws to thy bad use.  
What next must follow but convulsive throes,  
Succeeding each the other, till ensues  
A wild delirium and eternal death!

“I turn me to the north, the south, the east:—  
Empires and kingdoms stretch in long array,  
Tottering and crumbling to their bases, rent  
By their internal strife,  
The passions vile of those that would be great,  
Or, great already, ever thirst for more.  
How loathsome to thy sight, great Heaven! this  
mass,  
Corrupt, confused, which thou didst destine first  
To be the best, the proudest of thy works,—  
How loathsome, how impure!  
Yet naught is inaccessible to Thee  
In ocean, earth, or sky; and thou hast said

That these thy works are good, and shall be so  
To all eternity, though sullied now :  
Thy Word shall come with awful power ere long !  
The dregs of earth shall fill the tombs they build,  
And from one mighty, teeming multitude,  
Thou wilt choose forth THINE OWN !”

He ceased to speak ;  
And, statue-like, upon the pinnacle  
Of the great Monarch, rested still,  
As though he were most loath to quit  
His icy throne.  
’Tis joy to him to triumph o’er the world,  
That world still hushed in slumber at his feet,  
And feel his burning thoughts ascend to heaven !  
His starry eyes are filled  
With glory from above ;  
They revel in the vast expanse,  
They heed no more the valley !

Lo ! the thick mists arise,  
Swathing the mountain round  
Within their dusky folds.  
They roll beneath his feet,  
And frown upon the world,  
But ever o’er his head  
The gorgeous mid-day sun  
Shines forth resplendently !

Shine on, thou mighty orb,  
And pour thy living light  
In liquid, golden streams !

The Hermit hails thee ! revels in the glow  
Of thy celestial presence !

Upon an islet now,  
Amid a milk-white, dazzling sea,  
He stands alone. Such quiet reigns,  
Such gracious and such holy quiet,  
Known only in those wondrous realms above,  
Where the soft ambient air  
Yields to the pressure of angelic wings !

The Hermit stands alone ;  
The envious clouds have wrapt him from our sight !

Long time the mists hang round the granite King,  
Casting dark scowls upon the vales beneath,

And the big drops descend ;  
Then through each gorge and glen  
The rude winds wildly sweep,  
And soon the vapoury shroud  
Is scattered by their breath,  
Assuming to the eye  
In the wide span of heaven  
A thousand varied shapes,

Aërial palaces and pinnacles,  
Huge phantom mountains, glowing in the light,  
Rosy and golden, of the setting sun.

Again the icy crown  
Of the great monarch gleams  
In all its royal pride ;  
But he who lately stood  
Rejoicing on that height,

The gentle Hermit, the lone Man of Luz,  
He there is seen no more.

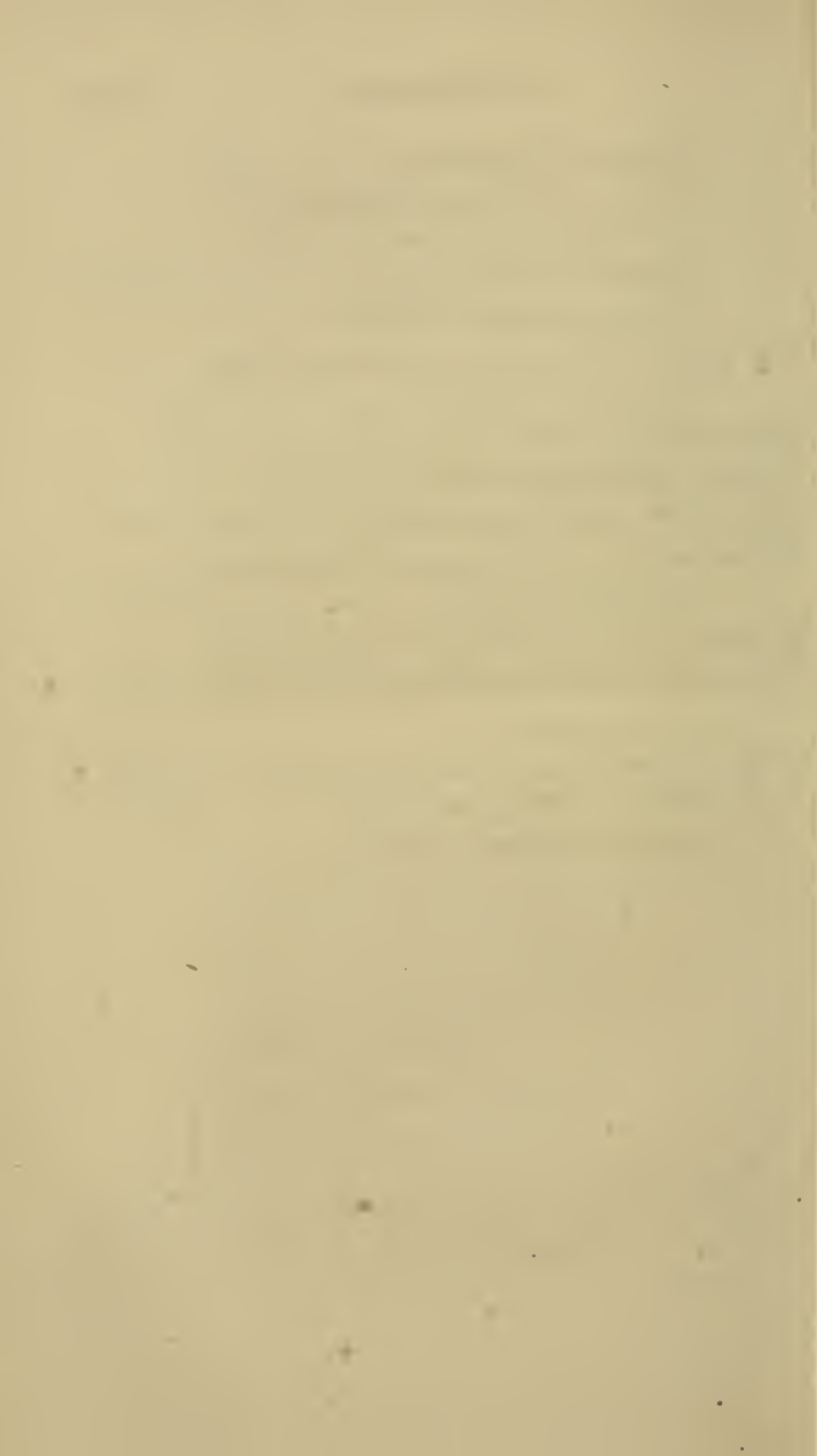
His noble form hath melted into air ;  
No more his footsteps echo on the rocks,  
No more we trace them in the silent paths,  
That wind among the gorges of the mountain.

Deep silence reigns :

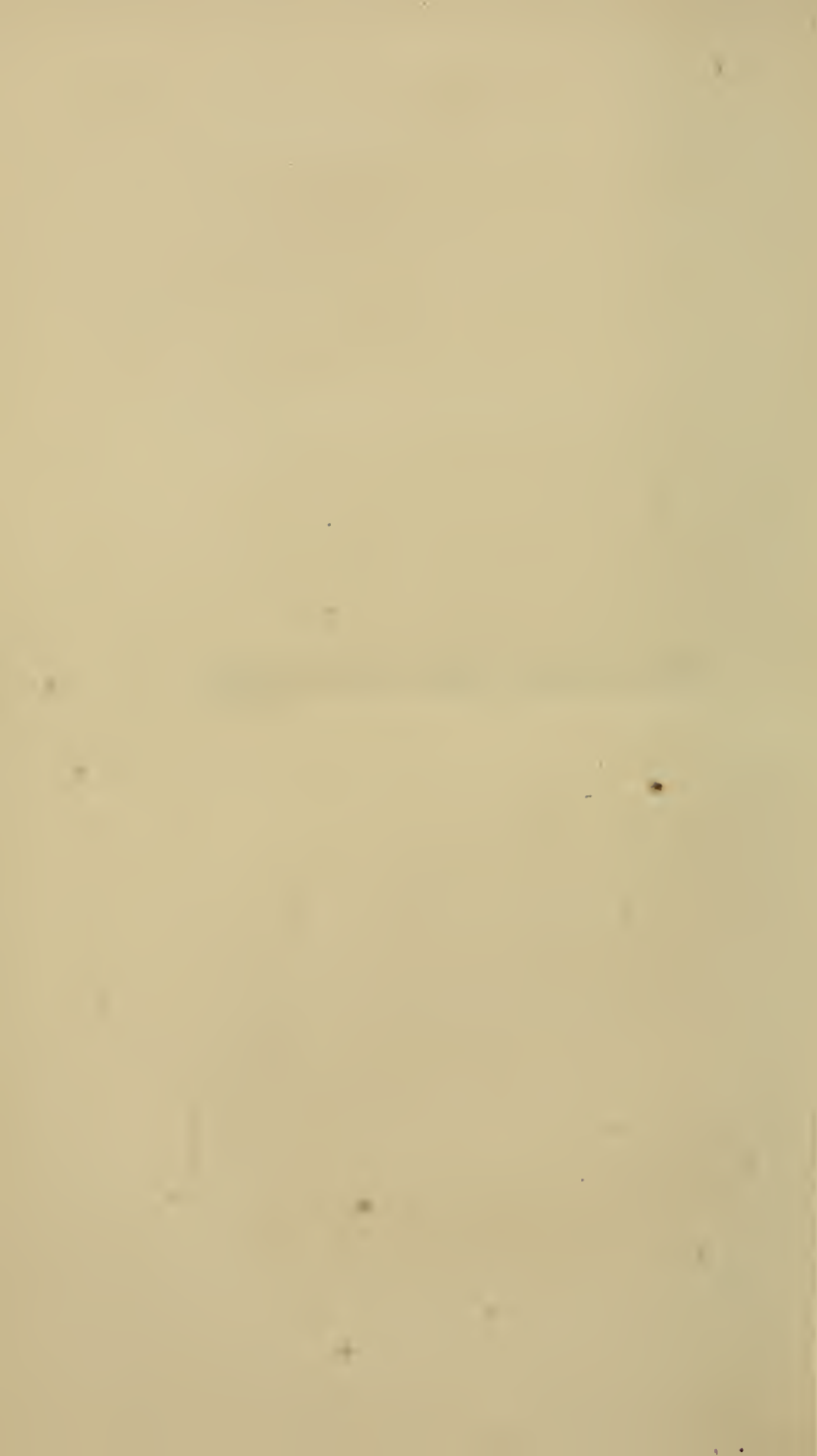
He hath departed ; whither ? who can tell ?  
His coming and his going, both, are clothed  
In mystery.

To solve it why essay ? enough to feel  
His life of faith and love  
Obtained its own reward.





Miscellaneous Poems and Sonnets.



A POET'S JOYS.

---

YES, let me roam in freedom, where  
    The mountains raise their heads,  
And breathe the fresh and joyous air  
On lofty summit, wild and bare ;  
Or in the gentle valley—there  
    The earth her carpet spreads.

Or lead me by the tell-tale brook  
    That babbles forth its lay  
Unto the flowers which in it look ;  
Or to a lonely quiet nook,  
With silence and great nature's book  
    To while the time away.

My joys are in vast solitudes  
    Far, far removed from men ;  
I love to track the pathless woods,  
Or where the kingly eagle broods  
Above the sparkling mountain floods  
    That thunder through the glen.

I love to see the golden sun  
    Awake the world from sleep—  
To watch how fast the shadows run,  
How soon bright Day's short life is done,  
Night's solemn reign in state begun  
    On the great western deep.

I love to hear the throats of birds  
    Pour forth at peep of morn  
A hymn of praise, without the words,  
Or learnèd rules of firsts and thirds ;  
The lowing of the distant herds,  
    Rich bass, the scores adorn.

In every spreading tree or flower,  
    An image lurks for me ;  
I see even in the falling shower  
The Angels weeping for the hour  
When Man succumbed to Evil Power.  
    And knew mortality.

I love to watch the eagle rise  
    On wide, expanded wings,  
And look with proud and flashing eyes  
Upon the glories of the skies ;  
Or round high mountain majesties,  
    Sweep in gigantic rings.

And when at eve the God of Day  
Reins in his steeds of flame,  
I love to watch him stalk away,  
Still clad in all his bright array,  
Which to the world doth seem to say,  
He goes the king he came !

I love to watch the stars appear  
Amid th' ethereal space ;  
A countless host from far and near  
That come to hail their sovereign dear,  
The moon, who then, serenely clear,  
Unveils her pallid face.

A meteor, like a flash of thought,  
Shoots through the gulf profound,  
With train of fire ; then, lo !—'t is naught !  
By this the erring world is taught  
That Vanity, so glittering wrought,  
Is but a sight or sound.

There's joy in all the wondrous things  
Betwixt the sky and sod ;  
And Music from her million springs  
Sustains this truth the Poet sings,  
Creation is a Harp—its strings  
Touched by the hand of God !

THE MAID OF OCEAN.

---

UPON the sands of ocean stood  
A maiden tall and fair ;  
In proud inspirèd attitude  
Long hours she lingered there.  
The wind toyed with her golden locks  
And stirred her raiment white ;  
She looked the queen of waves and rocks,  
That maiden fair and bright.

She gazed upon the stormy deep  
Whose angry billows rolled  
E'en to her feet, with foaming sweep,  
To threaten one so bold :  
But unappalled amid the strife  
Of waters stood she there—  
They could not steal the charmèd life  
Of one so bright and fair.



“Roll on! rave on, thou stormy sea!”  
Exultingly she cried,  
“My cradle first was rocked by thee—  
Thou art my joy and pride!  
Thy wrath is music to mine ear,  
Thy sleep felicity—  
Roll on thy course from year to year,  
Stream of eternity!

“Thy passions are not those of men,  
Thou hast no thoughts impure;  
There is no malice in thee when  
With smiles thou dost allure.  
Both fierce and sudden is thy wrath,  
When in its might displayed;  
For Crime thou hast no secret path,  
No poison, and no blade.

“If e’er thy waters owned a stain  
’Twas Man that left it there,  
To vanish soon—no spot of pain  
Thy purity will bear.  
The myriads that have found their rest  
Beneath thine emerald pall  
Sleep sounder than within the breast  
Of earth, or marble wall.

“Roll on ! rave on ! for ever loved,  
For ever glorious sea—  
Mirror whereon God’s spirit moved  
In its immensity !  
Roll on ! rave on a little space,—  
The death of Time is near,  
And that dread Form upon thy face  
Shall once more reappear !”

## I.

LOVE.  

---

LONG hath the voice of song been hushed in me ;  
I scarce know why, for I am much the same—  
And yet, methinks, 'tis not so. Poesy !  
I love thy numbers, I revere thy name ;  
But in my breast there is a raging flame  
Which burneth ceaselessly both night and day ;  
That fire is Love, unquenchable, supreme,  
And brooks naught else beneath its sovereign sway.  
Yet will I dip me in thy sunny stream,  
Sweet Harmony, that when she wanders near  
My voice from out thy waves may strike her ear,  
And steep her senses in a blissful dream.  
Ha !—see !—she comes !—she lingers near the  
brink,—  
And now she bendeth down to drink !—to drink !

## II.

HOPE.  

---

FAIR child of heaven ! soul-inspiring Hope !  
Why from my fond embraces hast thou flown ?  
May I not know why thou from me art gone ?  
Why I am left thus desolate to cope  
With the rude world ? Once, when against the slope  
Of the bright heavens I saw thy colours thrown,  
My soaring spirit caught a higher tone ;  
But now I feel no more thy mighty prop.  
Thy rainbow hues have faded from my mind,  
And left its troubled waters dark as night ;  
And dismal thoughts rush o'er them, like a wind,  
Blasting all others with a fatal blight !  
O must it thus continue ? Hope, be kind !  
Disperse these terrors with a ray of light !

## III.

HOME.  

---

How dark and dreary is this winter night !  
The voices of the winds are loud and shrill  
As they rush madly forth to sport their fill  
Upon the pathless heath. With true delight  
I sit alone, and store my mind, or write,  
Or gaze into the cheerful little flame  
That leaps up on the hearth close at my side.  
Oh, why should men so pant, so thirst for fame  
And the vain glories that compose a Name—  
Which, after all, cannot for aye abide ?  
Within the compass of these narrow walls  
Is bliss ; outside, the world doth rage and foam.  
And he who listens to Ambition's calls  
Must wander through the storm without a Home !

## IV.

LIFE.  

---

OUR early childhood is the first fair beam  
Of morning in the East ; and, as we grow,  
The colours deepen to a fiercer glow,  
And life appears one joyous, golden dream !  
Our thoughts, like angels, spread their wings and fly,  
Exulting o'er this earthly paradise,  
Which God hath spread before our wondering eyes,  
And crownèd with star-bespangled sky.  
But, mounted in the chariot of our years,  
Whose motion soon attains a headlong speed,  
We quickly learn by sounds of woe, and tears,  
Those truths to which at first we gave no heed.  
Our tempered thoughts then contemplate the West,  
And, like the sun, we slowly sink to rest.

## V.

THE AGE OF GOLD.  

---

WHAT are the treasures of the unfettered mind?  
The gems of thought it can dispense around?  
Why, so much dross! They lie upon the ground  
Unvalued by the bulk of human kind.  
In vain the Poet's mighty spirit soars  
To sing of beauty in the realms above,  
Or stoops to earth and tells a tale of love  
That touched his soul on distant sunny shores:  
Men's thoughts are on the metal from the mine  
Which they can grasp, and with it sway the world:  
Nor shall they care for that which is divine  
Until the earth is from its centre hurled—  
Then only will their awe-struck eyes behold  
The soul resplendent in its native gold!



## VI.

THE PAST.  

---

THE Past is like a place where many tombs  
Stand in the unvexed silence of the night ;  
And Memory is the moon, whose silver light  
Steals in among the death-polluted rooms.  
The ghosts arise, and bathe them in her beams,  
As in a crystal pool. Some cherished form  
Appears again, as lovely and as warm  
As when it lived ; but others draw the shroud  
Over their faces, and avoid the gleams  
Of light, like hateful shadows. Motley crowd !  
'Tis in your power some pleasure still to give,  
Though ye are dead, and never more shall live.  
I've spent long hours among you, and the sun  
Has seen me grieve my spectre-dream was done.

## VII.

THE PRESENT.  

---

THE Present is the life, the breathing form,  
That comes all joyous, like the rising morn ;  
Or, bathed in tears, dejected and forlorn,  
Doth seem a wreck struck by some mighty storm.  
The countless thousands pour their streams along,  
Through many channels, to their several ends—  
Onward, still onward with a current strong !  
Strangers to-morrow are the dearest friends.  
The note of War is sounding in the East ;  
Grim Death impatient for his bloody feast ;  
And angel Peace home up to heaven ascends,  
To take her seat upon a thorne of glory—  
Joy unto all, when she once more descends,  
And bloodshed only shall survive in story !

## VIII.

## THE FUTURE.



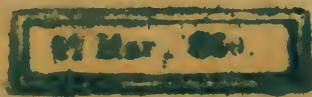
THE FUTURE ! 't is a heaven or a hell :  
An Eden passing fair ; a desert waste ;  
A glorious isle amid rough ocean's swell ;  
A dismal rock by roaring surge embraced.  
We know not what it may be, yet our eyes  
Are by a mighty impulse to it drawn,  
And, ere a happy Present fades and dies,  
Our secret thoughts are with the morrow's dawn.  
The glories of the earth, the sea, the skies  
May mingle with our silent reveries ;  
But still 't is there, that one prevading dream,  
The joys, the dangers of forthcoming days ;  
Now tinged with sadness, like the evening beam,  
Now clothed, like noon, in full meridian blaze.

## X.

## THE STARS.

THE stars above us ! Are they worlds ? or gleams  
 Of mightier, purer, though still veiled things ?  
 Are they the seraph choirs, from whose sweet strings  
 The golden harmony of Heaven streams ?  
 Are they the souls of Saints, who, though earthborn,  
 Have thus been glorified, thus made to shine  
 As lamps unto the world they did adorn—  
 Which once denied their mission was divine ?—  
 Yet more ! Those stars are God's own words, out-  
 spread  
 Upon the vast abyss, line after line !  
 First revelation, ere that Blood was shed  
 Which raised a Living Glory from the Dead,  
 And made Man what he is. Read, gazer, read  
 The myriad wonders of yon starry creed !

THE END,



W 19

## IX.

## ETERNITY.



By day, by night, gaze on the troubled deep,  
And then upon the mighty dome above :  
They both are seas, yet neither is asleep.  
One watches with its countless eyes of love ;  
The other chafes, and boils, and leaps, and roars,  
Or bursts in thunder on the rocky shores  
With awful discord. But th' ethereal sea,  
Though vaster far, is ever still the same,  
Unchanged, unchanging—'t is Eternity !  
God's holy throne ; the sun, His tongue of flame,  
Speaking in glory, yet in mystery,  
The marvels that compose His wondrous name !  
The moon that sparkles on the rolling wave  
Displays His mercy and intent to save.





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